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RUSE
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The PENNY ARCADIAN

Copiously Illustrated — Afternoon Edition, Price One Penny

BARONESS BEGUILING

OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

THE CITY'S FAVORITE SON, HIS MIND IS RAZOR-SHARP

EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY, HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

MIRANDA CROSS

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR, SOMETHING BUBBLES BENEATH HER SURFACE

SHE VISITS OUR SHORES

PARTINGTON societal circles are awhirl with the arrival of one Miranda Cross, Baroness of the Eastern land of Kharibast. According to her local hosts, Lord and Lady Wainscott of the Blumjuine district, Baroness Cross plans to set up permanent residence in our fair city and has already begun shipping crates of exotic finery and *objets d'art* to the site of her new mansion, all but completed as of this writing.

The Baroness, who came to international fame after parlaying her late husband's ailing estate into a veritable kingdom of wealth and political power, has spent the last eighteen months touring the world. She is accompanied in her travels by a small entourage of servants uncommon, few of whom are versed in the King's language and thus are best approached with patience and caution.

WAINSCOTTS TO INTRODUCE

Lord and Lady Wainscott have announced a grand ball to be held at their manor at week's end, at which time Baroness Cross will be formally introduced to Partington's favored citizens and its brokers of power.

BANKER MURDERED

EARS SLICED, STOLEN!

PARTINGTON police yesterday found the body of banker Charles X. Victor, a victim of foul play. While no suspects have yet been detained, Hughes' partner, Edgar Murchand, has himself posted a sizeable reward for any information leading to the arrest and prosecution of the villainous soul or souls responsible.

Most curious was the dissected state of Victor's corpse, leaving city wags to dub this the "Victorian Ear Mystery." No photoengravings have been released •••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

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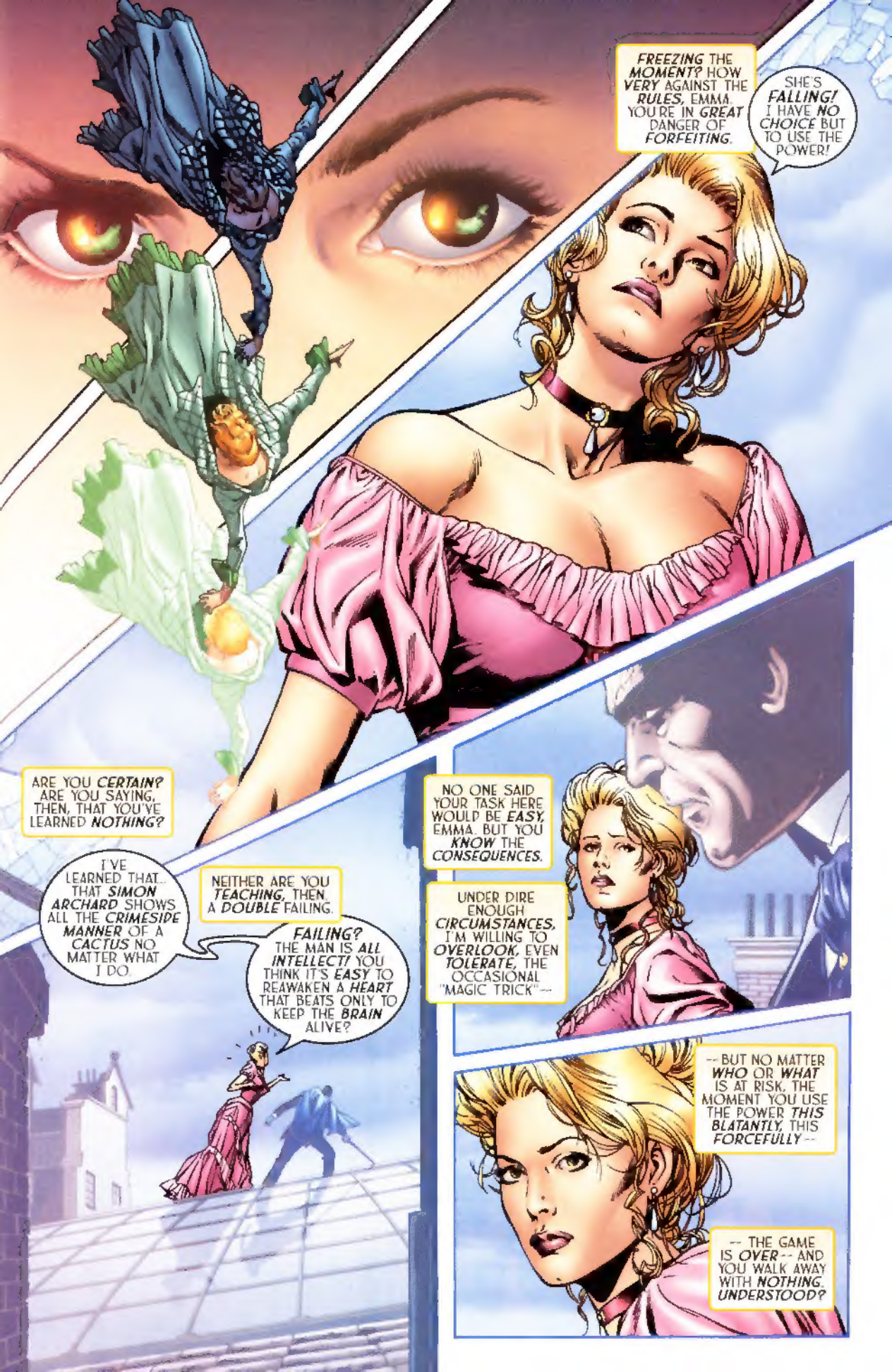
...SO AS YOU CAN SEE, MR. ARCHARD, THERE'S VERY LITTLE FOR US TO GO ON IN THIS MATTER.
WE'VE ASSEMBLED CERTAIN MATERIALS THAT WE ASSUME PERTAIN TO THE MURDER, BUT I'D HARDLY CALL THEM CLUES.
NEITHER OUR BRIGHTEST INVESTIGATORS NOR THE BOYS IN FORENSICS CAN DISCERN ANY REAL MEANING FROM SUCH--
HIM.
WHAT? I... ...I...
DAMN YOU, ARCHARD! HOW DID YOU--?

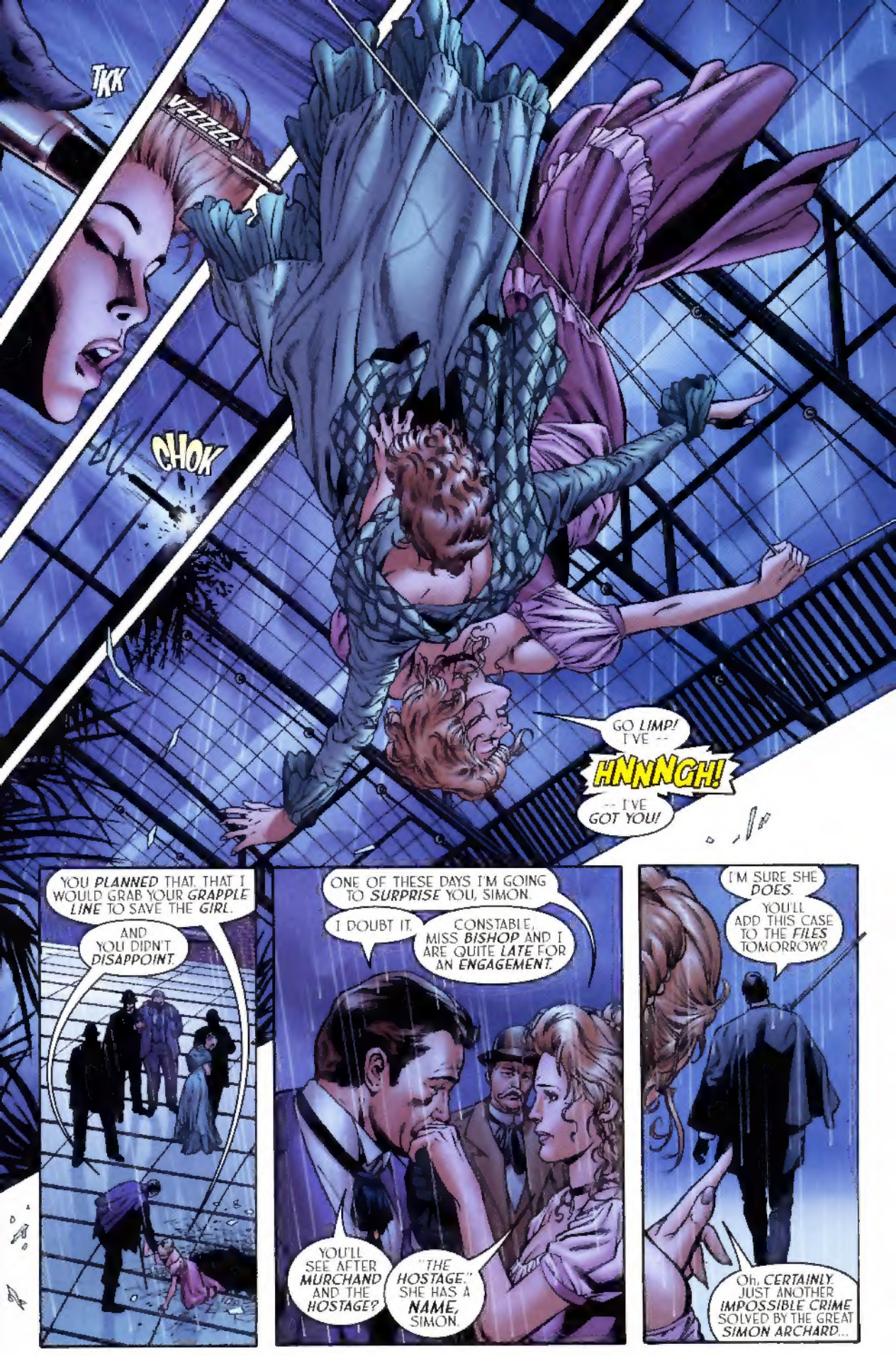
PLEASE, MR. MURCHAND. THE BELLOWS ALONE...! =SIGH=
SIMON--?
YES, EMMA. "YOUR REPUTATION PRECEEDS YOU, SIMON." "YOU'VE DONE IT AGAIN, MILORD." "KUDOS."
IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A RESPONSE THIS TIME, TRY THIS ONE:
"TAXI!"
SIMON!
Oh. OF COURSE.
THE INEVITABLE "ESCAPE." AREN'T THERE ANY ORIGINAL CRIMINALS LEFT IN THIS WORLD?
STAY BACK OR THE GIRL DIES!
I WILL NOT BE JAILED!
EEEEE!
SIMON, THE GIRL! SHE'S TERRIFIED, AND FOR GOOD REASON!
I BEG YOU, CHOOSE YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY!
DON'T BE A FOOL, MURCHAND. SURRENDER IS YOUR ONLY OPTION. WHERE IS THERE TO RUN? CONSIDER THE ASPHALTUM BENEATH YOUR FEET.
I MEAN IT! STAY BACK OR--
ASPHALTUM?
AAAH--
--AAAH--
--AAAH--
A PARTICULARLY INFERIOR GRADE IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD, ALREADY SUBJECTED TO DEGRADATION FROM SUN EXPOSURE, ONLY WEAKENED BY THE RAIN.
SIMON--!
IT'S WHAT SECURES THE BARRIER YOU'VE PRESSED AGAINST.
I PUT YOUR WEIGHT AT 230 POUNDS, HERS AT 106.
AND A HALF.
THE ASPHALTUM SUPPORTS PERHAPS 275.
AT BEST.
AAAAH!
EEEEEEEEEEE!

SIMON, NOT TO QUESTION YOUR METHODS, BUT THE GIRL--!
I AGREE. IT WOULD HELP IF SHE STOPPED THRASHING ABOUT. I NOTE THE TREADING ON YOUR BOOTSOLES IS DANGEROUSLY WORN, MURCHAND.
HOW LONG DO YOU THINK YOU CAN MAINTAIN YOUR FOOTING ON RAINSLICK GLASS BEFORE PLUMMETING INTO FREEFALL--
AAAAH!
AAAAH!
--AND SHATTERING YOUR BONES ON THE STREET BELOW?
AAAAH!
SIMONNNN--!
CONSIDER ALSO THAT THE ROOF OF THIS ARBORETUM, THOUGH STRONG, HAS ITS SHARE OF FISSURES AND FLAWS OBVIOUS TO THE TRAINED EYE.
OH, NO
NO, NO, NO...!
Ah...
...THERE'S ONE.
KOSH
AIEEEEEEE!
SIMON!!

HOLD ON! I'LL PULL YOU UP!
Oh, GOD...
RUDDY CHAT! CARVE YOUR HEART OUT, I WILL!
REALLY, SIR.
JUST COULDN'T STOP PROVOKING HIM, COULD YOU?
REACH! JUST A LITTLE... FARTHER...!
YOU'RE NOT THE FIRST WHO'S TRIED.
NO!
STOP!
NNNH
NNNH
NNNNHHHHHH
AAAH!


FREEZING THE MOMENT? HOW VERY AGAINST THE RULES, EMMA. YOU'RE IN GREAT DANGER OF FORFEITING.
SHE'S FALLING! I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO USE THE POWER!
ARE YOU CERTAIN? ARE YOU SAYING, THEN, THAT YOU'VE LEARNED NOTHING?
I'VE LEARNED THAT... THAT SIMON ARCHARD SHOWS ALL THE CRIMESIDE MANNER OF A CACTUS NO MATTER WHAT I DO.
NEITHER ARE YOU TEACHING, THEN. A DOUBLE FAILING.
FAILING? THE MAN IS ALL INTELLECT! YOU THINK IT'S EASY TO REAWAKEN A HEART THAT BEATS ONLY TO KEEP THE BRAIN ALIVE?
NO ONE SAID YOUR TASK HERE WOULD BE EASY, EMMA. BUT YOU KNOW THE CONSEQUENCES.
UNDER DIRE ENOUGH CIRCUMSTANCES, I'M WILLING TO OVERLOOK, EVEN TOLERATE, THE OCCASIONAL "MAGIC TRICK"--
--BUT NO MATTER WHO OR WHAT IS AT RISK, THE MOMENT YOU USE THE POWER THIS BLATANTLY, THIS FORCEFULLY--
-- THE GAME IS OVER-- AND YOU WALK AWAY WITH NOTHING. UNDERSTOOD?

UNDERSTOOD.
THEN BEFORE YOU GO *THROUGH* WITH THAT STEP, BE *CERTAIN* THERE IS NO *ALTERNATIVE*--
--AND HAVE SOME FAITH IN YOUR STUDENT.
HMM
SO... GAME *OVER?*
NO.


TKK
VZZZZZ
CHOK
GO LIMP! I'VE --
HNNNGH!
-- I'VE GOT YOU!
YOU PLANNED THAT. THAT I WOULD GRAB YOUR GRAPPLE LINE TO SAVE THE GIRL.
AND YOU DIDN'T DISAPPOINT.
ONE OF THESE DAYS I'M GOING TO SURPRISE YOU, SIMON.
I DOUBT IT.
CONSTABLE, MISS BISHOP AND I ARE QUITE LATE FOR AN ENGAGEMENT.
YOU'LL SEE AFTER MURCHAND AND THE HOSTAGE?
"THE HOSTAGE." SHE HAS A NAME, SIMON.
I'M SURE SHE DOES.
YOU'LL ADD THIS CASE TO THE FILES TOMORROW?
Oh, CERTAINLY. JUST ANOTHER IMPOSSIBLE CRIME SOLVED BY THE GREAT SIMON ARCHARD...

...JUST ANOTHER DAY IN THE CITY OF PARTINGTON

EPTING COACH CO

MY NAME IS **EMMA BISHOP** SOME CALL ME THE PARTNER OF **SIMON ARCHARD**, THE WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE

OTHERS REFER TO ME MERELY AS HIS **ASSISTANT**

WELL, ONLY ONE OTHER ACTUALLY

THAT WOULD BE SIMON

WHO'S DRAGGING ME OUT TO **WAINSCOTT MANOR** AND SOME **COMING OUT PARTY** FOR SOME **OVER SEAS ROYALTY** OR SOME SUCH FOL DE ROL IN THE EVENT I SUPPOSE THAT MY **LINGUISTIC SKILLS** MIGHT BE OF SOME AID

EVEN FOR ALL THE **KNOWLEDGE** IN SIMON'S HEAD, HE SIMPLY WON'T **BOTHER** TO LEARN **FOREIGN LANGUAGES**. HE ARGUES THAT THE ART OF **COMMUNICATION** IS ONE BEST MASTERED ON A SUBTLE **NON VERBAL** LEVEL

I DISAGREE

IT'S A QUARREL DIFFICULT TO **WIN** SEEING AS HOW, IN GENERAL, PEOPLE DON'T REALLY ENJOY **TALKING** TO HIM

SIMON'S POSITION IN SOCIETAL CIRCLES HAS MORE TO DO WITH HIS REPUTATION THAN HIS CHARM I'M SURE HE THINKS HE'S BEING HELPFUL, BUT FOR ALL HIS GIFTS WELL

SIMON! HOW WONDERFUL TO SEE YOU AND IRMA AGAIN!

EMMA!

G'LES, TAKE IRMA'S WRAP WITH SIMON'S COAT

RIGHT AWAY, MADAM

..SMALL TALK ISN'T REALLY AMONG THEM

HOW MANY COATS HAS THAT SERVANT TAKEN TONIGHT LADY WAINSCOTT?

WHY ALL OF THEM, I SUPPOSE ? WHY?

BECAUSE ONE WONDERS HOW MANY VALUABLES HE'S ALREADY FILCHED FROM THEIR POCKETS AND PASSED THROUGH THE WINDOW TO H'S ASSOCIATE OUTSIDE

SHALL WE?

LET'S

TRUTH TO TELL, IT DOESN'T MATTER WHOSE KITCHEN SIMON IS IN

HE'LL ALWAYS STIR THE POT

POLICE COMMISSIONER THORNTON IS, AFTER ALL THESE YEARS UNIQUELY ACCUSTOMED TO SIMON'S MANNER

SIMON! DEAR!

EMMA

JUST HEARD ABOUT THE MURCHAND ARREST

DETECTIVE HABER TELLS ME HE WAS ABLE TO FULLY EXPLAIN THE MURDER THIS TIME BEFORE YOU INSERTED THE SUBPRIT

YOU'RE SLIPPING

I'M GLAD TO SEE THE RISE IN GROTTESCAPHOBIA DIDN'T KEEP YOU AWAY

FEAR OF GARGOYLES?

THEY DO TEND TO FLIT ABOUT LIKE BATS, COMMISSIONER BUT

ACTUALLY, THEY'VE EATEN THE BATS

OH

HOW FARES THE DEPARTMENT THESE DAYS THEOPOLOUS?

POORLY, I'M AFRAID THIS MORAL DECAY I'VE BEEN ON ABOUT?

IT'S VERY REAL, SIMON

THE SIMPLE GRIFT OR BAGSNATCH IS QUICKLY BECOMING A THING OF THE PAST

WHY JUST TODAY, MY MEN HAD TO DEAL WITH AN ATTEMPTED RITUAL SUICIDE DOWNTOWN A MAD DOG TERROR ZING THE DOCKS AND A GANG OF TEENAGERS--

--TEENAGERS!--

--WHO WERE FENCING STOLEN GOODS TO FUEL THEIR MEDICINAL CACOETHES!

ADDICTIONS? TO WHAT?

THERE'S AN OPIATE PROBLEM DAWNING IN THIS TOWN A WAVE OF INEXPENSIVE DRUGS IS SWEEPING PARTINGTON TEMPTING THE YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE WITH AN UPLIFTING EUPHORIA

THAT, I PRESUME, TOO OFTEN ENDS IN MADNESS

QUITE RIGHT SIMON, YOU'VE BEEN COMPLAINING FOR SOME TIME THAT OUR FAIR BURG NO LONGER PRESENTS YOU WITH MEANINGFUL CHALLENGES

I'D GLADLY SUFFER YOUR ENNUI AS THE PRICE PAID IF THAT WERE TRUE, BUT IT MAY NOT BE ERE LONG ONE CANNOT HELP BUT WONDER

WHATEVER NEW EVIL WILL VISIT US NEXT?

IF I MAY

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! AS PROUD *HOSTS* OF THE LATEST *VISITOR* TO PARTINGTON'S *SHORES*, LORD AND LADY WAINSCOTT ARE *HONORED* AT THIS TIME TO PRESENT FRESH FROM *KHARIBAST*

THE BARONESS *MIRANDA CROSS* AND

M M MY

A -*AND* HER MUH-MANSERVANT, A *ANTAEUS*

PLEASE TO ALLOW MY *INTRODUCTION*, MR ARCHARD

IT IS *INFREQUENT* I CROSS THE PATH WITH ONE SO *CELEBRATED*

AND YET YOU *KNOW* ME

OF YOU

EVEN N *KHARIB*--?

A MAN OF *WONDER*

YES, HE *IS* I'M

AND *SURPRISING HANDSOMENESS*

OH, DEAR

WELL *ANTAEUS*, IS IT? *GREETINGS* OR SHOULD I SAY MALLY *TOFIN* ?

DIER *THON* ?

PEÑAN *PENÁN* ?

HELLO?

AND, NATURALLY, THE SKILL WITH WHICH YOU UNRAVELED THE *FORSYTHE* CONUNDRUM MADE *PAPERS*?

PRESS *YES*

IN MY HOMELAND

I HAVE *CLIPPINGS* IF YOU'D CARE TO *READ* THEM SOME TIME. COME *BY* AND WE'LL

MR ARCHARD?

OH, I HAVE BROUGHT HIM *BOREDOM*?

HARDLY BARONESS. HE FINDS *THAT* ON HIS *OWN* IT'S NOTHING *PERSONAL*

IS SHE COMING *THIS WAY*?

YOU'RE THE DETECTIVE

YES SIMON, YOU'VE *INTRIGUED* HER

QUITE A *SURPRISE*

AND YOU MUST BE *EMMA*

SIGH FOR THE *LAST TIME*, MY NAME IS

oh EMMA YES, EMMA

YOUR LOVER IS RATHER *SINGLE-MINDED*, NO?

MADAM! HE IS *HARDLY* MY MY OUR RELATIONSHIP'S *PURELY PROFESSIONAL!*

Hmmm

AND I PREFER TO THINK OF SIMON AS *FOCUSED*

AN *ATTRACTIVE QUALITY*

DEPENDING ON WHAT COMMANDS HIS *ATTENTION*

OR *WHO*?

PERHAPS GOOD *EVENING*, MISS BISHOP

ARE YOU *GONE*?

THEN NOT YET, IT ISN'T

WITH THE REWARD FROM THE CARRINGTON AFFAIR, SIMON REFURBISHED AN ABANDONED CATHEDRAL IN THE NORTHSHIRE PART OF TOWN AND MADE IT HIS HOME AND HEADQUARTERS. IT HOUSES SIMON'S INVENTIONS, HIS LABORATORIES, AND A LIBRARY LEGENDARY FOR ITS SIZE.
NEITHER GATED NOR SECLUDED, THE BUILDING IS READILY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL. NEVERTHELESS, WHILE OUR SERVICES SEEM OFTEN IN DEMAND, ONE DOESN'T SIMPLY WALK IN TO SIMON ARCHARD'S HOME AND ASK FOR HELP.
ADMITTANCE REQUIRES QUITE LITERALLY A SCREENING PROCESS.
STAND HERE.
STATE YOUR BUSINESS.
NAME'S MCCORKINDALE. Y'WOUNT KNOW ME.
BUT A COME T'SEE MR. ARCHARD.

A HARSH SMITE O BLACKNESS IM STEEPED IN KIND S R
A DARK RIDDLE WIOUT NO ANSWER
=SIGH=
VERY WELL MY ASSISTANT WILL SEE YOU IN

THE POOR MAN TREMBLED, THOUGH WHETHER A RESULT OF NERVES OR A BOTTLE, I COULD NOT SAY NOT THAT YOU COULD CONDEMN HIM FOR SIPPING WHISKEY

NOT WITH THE SORROW IN THOSE EYES

AWARE TAINT TH KINDA HIGH FALUTIN' CASE WHAT YOU'RE KNOWN FER SIR

BUT TH BOYS DOWN AT THE DOCK PUT SOME COIN TGETHER TO HIRE YE IF IT'S A QUESTION O MONEY

MONEY IS NEVER THE QUESTION TELL ME ABOUT THE VICTIM

O'SHAUGHNESSY IS

--WAS HIS NAME A LEGENDARY CAPN IN HIS DAY HE WAS--BLOVED BY ALL TH DOCKWORKERS N FISHERMEN SIR SWEARIN NEER T BREATHE NOTHIN BUT SALT AIR, HE KEPT A RUM LIL SHACK RIGHT THERE ON TH PIER, AN WE ALL TENDED T HIM

S WHY WHA HAPPEN MADE NO SENSE A TALL

RUN THROUGH A DOZEN TIMES RE MORE, HE WAS KNIFED N GORED LEFT FLOATIN UNDER THE PIER BUT WHY? T WEREN'T NO ROBBERY O'SHAUGHNESSY NEER HAD TWO PENNIES TINGLE

I IMAGINE NOT

I CAN'T HELP YOU MCCORKINDALE THIS IS A ROUTINE POLICE MATTER WITH NOT ENOUGH CLUES AND TOO MANY SUSPECTS

THE DOCKS ARE FULL OF UNSAVORY CHARACTERS AND GOINGS-ON DOUBTLESS THE OLD MAN SAW OR OVERHEARD SOMETHING THAT HE WASN'T SUPPOSED TO AND WAS SILENCED

THAT'S THE ONLY EXPLANATION

I DON'T THINK SO, SIR SEE THERE'S SOMETHIN I HAVN'T MENTIONED YET HE COULDN'TA HEARD NOTHIN WHAT WOULD HAVE CAUSED ANYONE NO TROUBLE, CAUSIN O'SHAUGHNESSY

HE WAS BLIND N ALL BUT DEAF

REALLY

WHEN FORGER EUGENE FEINSILBER WAS KIDNAPPED FROM A LOCKED PRISON CELL, SIMON YAWNED AND SOLVED THE CASE WHILE COMPLETING A CROSSWORD PUZZLE

WHEN THE DUCHESS OF LARTUUM'S ENTIRE SUMMER HOME WAS STOLEN RIGHT DOWN TO THE STABLES, HE PLACED A TELEPHONE CALL DURING HIS MANICURE AND MADE HEADLINES BEFORE DINNER

THIS TIME, HE'S ACTUALLY ON HIS FEET IS THERE SOMETHING TO THIS CASE THAT STRIKES A CHORD WITHIN HIM? DOES IT MATTER?

ALL I'M SURE OF IS THAT THERE'S A GLINT IN SIMON'S EYES I'VE NOT SEEN BEFORE

AS THE AFTERNOON PROGRESSES, WE SORT THROUGH THE VICTIM O'SHAUGHNESSY'S PERSONAL EFFECTS WE SPEAK TO THOSE WHO KNEW HIM WE COMB HIS LAST KNOWN WHEREABOUTS ALL OF WHICH LEADS US TO

NOTHING

YOU'RE INVADING A *CRIME SCENE*

I'M *SITTING* WHERE O'SHAUGHNESSY SAT EACH DAY, SIMON. I'M TRYING TO SEE THE WORLD THROUGH THE *VICTIM'S* EYES - SO TO *SPEAK*

IMAGINING A LIFE WHERE THE COMPANIONSHIP OF A *DOG* HAS TO COMPENSATE FOR *SENSES* THAT HAVE *ATROPHIED*

IT'S MY METHOD OF ACQUIRING SOME BETTER *SENSE* OF IT ALL, PONDERING THE *WHY* OF IT

THE FACT THAT SOMEONE'S NOT ALREADY IN *JAIL* DOESN'T SPEAK WELL OF OUR *TRADITIONAL* METHODS, SIMON

YOU *CLAIM* ALL SOLUTIONS EMERGE FROM *LOGIC* AND *EVIDENCE* - BUT EVEN YOU CAN SEE HOW *TEDIOUS* INTELLECTUAL *PUZZLES* EVENTUALLY BECOME

GIVEN *THAT*, I DON'T *ACCEPT* THAT THERE'S NOT MORE *DRIVING* YOU THAN *MORBID CURIOSITY*. WE WOULDN'T DO WHAT WE *DO* IF YOU HADN'T, AT SOME POINT *FELT* A NEED TO *HELP* PEOPLE. HADN'T REALIZED THERE'S AN ENTIRE *WORLD* BEYOND THE TIP OF YOUR *NOSE*

WHATEVER CAUSED YOU TO *FORGET* OR *IGNORE* THAT?

THERE *IS* A HEART INSIDE *YOUR* CHEST, SIMON

AND I *WILL REINTRODUCE* THE TWO OF YOU IF IT'S THE LAST THING I

OH BLOODY *HELL*

SIMON ?

STRANGE

CRATES ON A *LOADING DOCK?*

UNDER A *NEWLY SHREDDED TARPAULIN*, CONTAINED BY *FRESHLY FRAYED ROPES*

OH!

GAARN! GAARN FAL TO *JUNGA!!*

A *LANGUAGE* YOU *RECOGNIZE?*

EMMA?

HE WANTS US TO *LEAVE NOW*

JUNGA TATEEN!

ASK IF WE CAN EXAMINE WHAT'S UNDER THE *TARPAULIN*

I DON'T THINK I *HAVE* TO

JUNGA!!

SUSPICIOUS

QUITE CAN YOU *PRESS* THE POINT WITHOUT RISKING GRAVE BODILY *HARM?*

I *DOUBT* IT

THEN WE *LEAVE*

RATHER *ELEGANT* OF YOU

ON THE *CONTRARY*

I'M FEELING RATHER CLUMSY

OOPS

SNAP

GAARN! GAARN RAGA!

JUNGA! FALA ROTHAN! TAY ROTHANNNNN!

START WALKING

AHUH= =AHUH=

A LITTLE WINDED

INTO THE ALLEY HURRY

THESE AREN'T RUNNING SHOES SIMON

ARE THEY STILL =AHUH= BEHIND US?

GOODNESS! WE =AHUH= WE CERTAINLY SHOWED THEM, DIDN'T WE!

YOU STAND IN THE WAY OF THE GREAT SIMON ARCHARD

AND HE'LL SPILL YOUR FISH! AHHAHA HAHA...!

AAAAHHH

=SIGH=

I CAN'T REMEMBER THE LAST TIME I HEARD THAT

THAT DIALECT?

NO, YOU GOOSE

THE SOUND OF SIMON ARCHARD LAUGHI--

OH!

EMMA, GET BACK!

बत हृकुद

TRANSLATION!

A RHAPASTAN AN EPITHET! DEAR GOD, SIMON -

THERE'S YOUR MURDERER! SOMEHOW, O'SHAUGHNESSY RAN AFOUL OF THE CULT OF PHARSA!

SINISTER

AND UNSTOPPABLE! SIMON, THIS GOES DEEPER THAN WE EVER COULD HAVE

NO.

NNGHH!

SINISTER -- AS IN LEFT

THE PHARSANS ALWAYS--

=HNNFF!=

ALWAYS HOLD THEIR SCYTHES IN THEIR LEFT-- UNCLEAN HAND--

NEVER THEIR RIGHT!

THIS IMPOSTOR HAS BEEN SENT TO RATHER CLUMSILY LEAD US DOWN A FALSE TRAIL, EMMA!

BY WHO, THEN?

YOU'RE THE INGLIST

ASK HIM

AIEEEE

FWUMPH

PERHAPS A LITTLE MORE QUICKLY NEXT TIME?

SWEET HEAVEN! SIMON HE JUST JUST BURST INTO FLAME? HOW WHAT--?

ONE MYSTERY AT A TIME, EMMA. WE'RE STILL INVESTIGATING A MURDER. BUT WE'VE MADE A CRITICAL MISTAKE

MR O'SHAUGHNESSY

THE POOR MAN

WAS NOT THE VICTIM

WHAT?

I SPEND THE NEXT HOUR GATHERING POLICEMEN AT SIMON'S BEHEST WHILE HE DASHES AROUND THE WATERFRONT LOOKING FOR ONE OFFICER IN PARTICULAR... THOUGH WHY AND TO WHAT END...?

VERIFY IT FOR ME OFFICER. HE WAS ROUGHLY 120 POUNDS. WHITE HAIR. A DANE?

YES SIR. THAT'S THE ONE

WHITE DANE? SIMON, WHO IN CREATION ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

THE VICTIM, EMMA. NOT THE OLD MAN

HIS DOG

YOU'LL RECALL THE COMMISSIONER MENTIONING A MAD HOUND THAT WAS PUT DOWN YESTERDAY BY THIS POLICEMAN

THE UNFORTUNATE BEAST WAS NO MERE VICTIM OF DISEASE, HOWEVER

HE WAS DRIVEN WILD BY THE SCENT OF THOSE FISH

FISH? BUT HOW--?

OUR *SEAFARING FRIENDS* ARE LESS *FISHERMEN*

THAN *SMUGGLERS*

OFFICERS, IF YOU'LL *EXAMINE* THEIR *CARGO*...

...YOU'LL FIND NUMEROUS *PHIALS* MADE OF BADLY DISCOLORED *METAL* AND CONTAINING...

NARCOTICS

A CLEVER BUT *RISKY* WAY TO IMPORT THEM. THE *DIGESTIVE ACIDS* OF THE FISH TEND TO *CORRODE* THE CONTAINERS

COMBINING WITH THE *DRUGS* TO CREATE A *UNIQUE ODOR*

THAT THE DOG MUST HAVE FOUND *IRRESISTIBLE*

ONCE BAITED BY THE *SCENT*, HE BOLTED *AWAY* FROM O'SHAUGHNESSY. TORE INTO A *CRATE* AND BEGAN EATING. HENCE THE *CLAW MARKS* AND TATTERED *BINDINGS*

THE WORRIED OLD MAN CAME CALLING FOR HIS *PET*. THE *CREW* NO DOUBT CAME UPON THEM *BOTH* AND *PANICKED*

KILLING THE OLD MAN FOR WHAT THEY *FEARED* HE'D SEEN BEFORE EVEN *REALIZING*, IF THEY *EVER* DID, THAT HE WAS *SIGHTLESS* AND OF *NO THREAT*

THE *DOG*, *MADDENED* BY THE *DRUGS*, GOT *AWAY* ONLY TO BE MISTAKEN AS *RABID* AND *SHOT*

OFFICER, IF YOU CAN *EXTRACT* FROM THESE RAKEHELLS THE NAME AND WHEREABOUTS OF THEIR *CAPTAIN*, WE'LL LEAVE THE *PROSECUTION* TO *YOU*

OFFICER!

AS YOU *WISH*!

HE'S NOT *TALKING TO ME!*

AFTER HIM!

MIDSHIP IT'S WAITING FOR YOU!

MIDSHIP

WAITING

SPARK THE FUSE

MATCHES

I HAVE NO

YEARRGH!

FWUMP

THAT *SCREAM!*

SIMON, WHAT COULD BE *DOWN* THERE?

NOT MUCH *NOW!*

TOPSIDE, EMMA! TOP-

BEFORE WE CAN MOVE A SINGLE STEP, THE FLAMES AND THE SMOKE ARE *UPON* US

AND I KNOW IN THAT ONE MOMENT THAT I HAVE LOST

THIS ISN'T A GLASS ROOFTOP. A GRAPPLING LINE WON'T AID ANYONE. SIMON HAD NO WAY TO PREPARE AN OUT

HE IS TRAPPED HERE, AND HE WILL DIE. DIE HORRIBLY UNLESS I

STOP!

"THE MOMENT YOU USE THE POWER THIS BLATANTLY, THIS FORCEFULLY," I WAS WARNED.

-- THE GAME IS OVER. BY THE TERMS OF MY ASSIGNMENT, I FORFEIT BY HALTING TIME TO ENACT A RESCUE. BUT THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE THAT WON'T COST SIMON HIS LIFE.

AND SO, IN THE MOTIONLESS SILENCE OF A FROZEN WORLD, I PONDER AND PLAN.

ONLY TO HAVE MY CONCENTRATION SHATTERED BY THE IMPOSSIBLE.

THE SOUND OF A HUMAN VOICE

I AM ASTONISHED.

YOU ARE THE ONE?

MIRANDA?

HOW? WHY AREN'T YOU?

I THOUGHT FOR CERTAIN IT WOULD BE THE DETECTIVE BEHIND SUCH POWER. NOT SOME TAWDRY SERF.

I AM NOT OF THE CUSTOM OF BEING MISTAKEN.

I FIND IT UNPLEASANT.

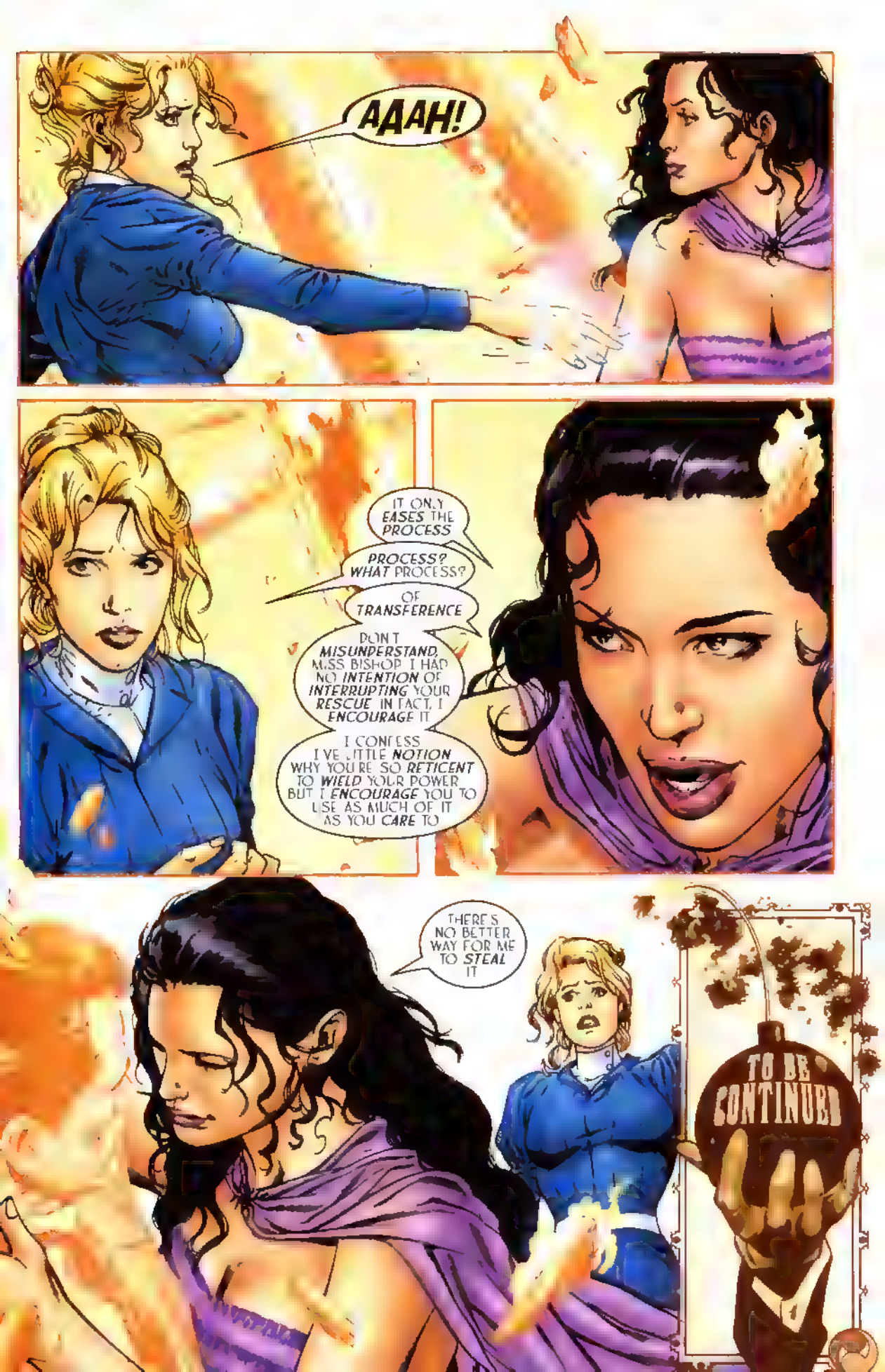
HMPH.

YOU'RE NOT. YOU'RE NOT LIKE ME, BUT YOU...

WHO ARE YOU?

PHYSICAL CONTACT? HOW MARVELOUSLY DARING.

GO AHEAD. TOUCH ME.


AAAH!
IT ONLY EASES THE PROCESS
PROCESS? WHAT PROCESS?
OF TRANSFERENCE
DON'T MISUNDERSTAND, MISS BISHOP. I HAD NO INTENTION OF INTERRUPTING YOUR RESCUE. IN FACT, I ENCOURAGE IT.
I CONFESS I'VE LITTLE NOTION WHY YOU'RE SO RETICENT TO WIELD YOUR POWER, BUT I ENCOURAGE YOU TO USE AS MUCH OF IT AS YOU CARE TO.
THERE'S NO BETTER WAY FOR ME TO STEAL IT
TO BE CONTINUED

The PENNY ARCADIAN

Page 33... A Bazaar of Gadgetry, Wares, Innocuous Pastimes, & Acknowledgements

The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa
Mark WAID WRITER
Butch GUICE PENCILER
Michael PERKINS INKER
Laura DePUY COLORIST
Dave LANPHEAR LETTERER

SAMPLE OUR

When visiting in Parrington, pl... ly opened Fresh Fruit and ...

THE RAIN IN ESPLA... PLAIN Better Educa... through our Special ... around the greater Pa... D'Armata School ... capabilities and ve...

WHAT

No single awe... There will be ... no item too ex... only question ... this location w...

...re! ...l be ...The ... to ...!

North ... Route ...

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Opens next month - The review will be written in next month's *Penny Arcadian* by our distinguished columnist

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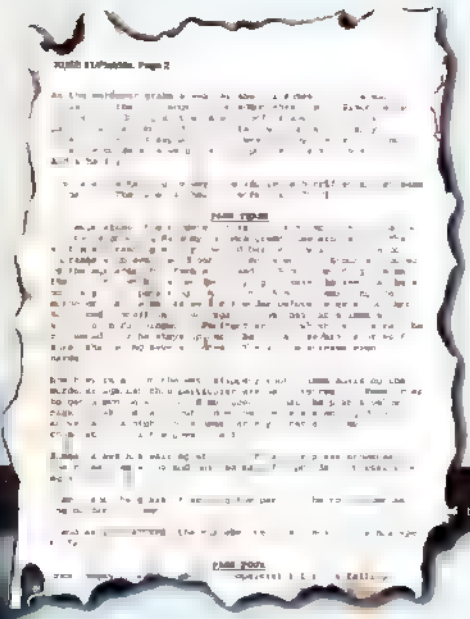
SPECIAL THANKS to Proprietress **YVONNE BERNARD** of **HOUSE of MAKE BELIEVE** of 1001 North Hercules Avenue in Clearwater, Florida for adorning the chroniclers of **RUSH**™ for their biographies on pages 34-41. To suit yourself, call (727) 446-1890.

MARK WAID · THE PLAY'S THE THING

Plying his trade in the secret recesses of a bunkered office, this chronicler of the macabre is rarely seen by his co-workers. Instead, they awake in the dawn to find bits of manuscript left behind as if by a strange St. Nicholas of Narration who, in turn and like his name-sake, pilfers their cupboards for sweets.

Column provided by House of Make Believe



The writer produces a plot, a document breaking down the story into specific images on each page. This is the plot for pages two and three of this issue.

BUTCH GUICE · CHARCOALS HIS SPECIALTY

For years now, producers of the fictional sketchbook have dueled for the services of one Jackson "Butch" Guice, whose pencil etchings capture perfectly the wonders of the society around us. Early in the morn until late in the evening, the skritch of his tools against plyboard is the music of creation.

Costume provided by House of Make Believe

The penciler designs the raw artistic composition of each page, often stopping to sketch out new characters or locales before drawing on the art boards, which, upon completion, are passed on to the inker.

MIKE PERKINS · A WORLD TO EMBELLISH

New to the Colonial shores, young Michael Perkins uses brush, nib, and India ink to imbue Butch Guice's fanciful imaginings with an ebon weight and an intricate depth of dimension. With a hearty "Pip, pip! Cheerio!" or "Bob's your uncle," Perkins cheerfully dispenses advice on matters of cultural authenticity, a deed much appreciated by his collaborators.

Costume provided by John Smith Clothiers

The inker receives the art boards from the penciler and literally "paints" over the pencils with ink, either applied via pen or brush, then erases the page to remove any stray pencil marks.

SENIOR DRAUGHTSMAN

LAURA DEPUY · PIGMENTS MINGLED

How many "piggy banks" have been shattered so that their owners, cherubic faces eager with anticipation, could purchase an opportunity to marvel at "The Magic of Lady DePuy and Her Electromagnetic Coloring Machine?" No one can say...but in the darkness, her countenance lit only by the dim glow of cathode rays, she wonders and smiles.

Costume provided by House of Make Believe

The colorist scans in the inked pages. Then, using Photoshop as her paintbrush, she creates color schemes and lighting effects to complete each scene.

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ARCHARD BAFFLED!
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FAMED DETECTIVE FAILS!
Mark Waid
Butch Guice
Mike Perkins
Laura DePuy

The **PENNY ARCADIAN**

Copiously Illustrated — **Afternoon Edition, Price One Penny**

DOCKYARD DISASTER

OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

THE CITY'S FAVORITE SON, HIS MIND IS RAZOR-SHARP

EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY, HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

MIRANDA CROSS

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR, SHE EXHIBITS A CERTAIN MAGIC

MYSTERY SHIP SET ABLAZE

WEIRD VESSEL RENT ASUNDER!

A sailing ship secretly ferrying an indeterminate quantity of illegal opiates caught fire following a mysterious explosion from deep within its holds.

Inside the ship at the time of the explosion were sleuth and scrutator Simon Archard and his assistant Emma Bishop. Archard had summoned the local constabularies dockside to gather evidence of the opiates which seamen of unknown origin were caught smuggling to Partington's shores inside the bellies of market-bound fish. While grateful for Archard's help in quelling the smuggling operation, authorities admit it has doubtless been in process for some weeks previous.

Though no police fatalities were reported following the blast, the whereabouts of Archard and Bishop are at this press-time unknown. •••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

Ruse™ Vol 1 Issue 2 DECEMBER 2001 ... Suite 2400, Oldsmar, Florida 34... CrossGen Comics ... CrossGeneration Comics ... CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. Ruse ... the CrossGen sigil ...

I FROZE TIME TO SAVE SIMON FROM IMMINENT PERIL
INSTEAD, I UNLEASHED SUDDEN CATASTROPHE.
BY ATTRACTING A SURPRISE GUEST
GET AWAY FROM HIM!
OR WHAT? I AM TO BE THRASHED WITH A BONNETFUL OF FAIRY DUST, YOU LITTLE DANDERFLUFF? PLEASE TRY I'LL TAKE ALL THE MAGIC YOU CAN BRING TO BEAR
LEAVING YOU WITH NONE
SO NOW I AM KNOWING THE SECRET OF SIMON ARCHARD'S SUCCESS! HE HAS A SORCERESS IN HIS EMPLOY!

NO! I'M NOT -- HE HE DOESN'T KNOW THAT I -

THINK, EMMA! THINK!

THI--

YOU SAY MY MAGIC DREW YOU HERE

LIKE A BEACON

THEN SHOULD IT ABRUPTLY GO AWAY -

-- HOPEFULLY, YOU W-- TOO

AAAAH!

YOU NEARLY BURNED ME YOU -- YOU

--YO BITC

THE REST OF HER DOUBTLESS-COLORFUL EPITHET IS DROWNED OUT BY THE CRASH OF FALLING TIMBERS ALMOST IMMEDIATELY, SHE'S LOST FROM SIGHT

AND JUST AS WELL

THANKFULLY, SIMON HASN'T A CLUE AS TO WHAT JUST OCCURRED IN THE SPACE BETWEEN SECONDS --

EMMA FOLLOW ME OUT! HURRY!

BUT IT AFFECTS HIS CLOCKWORK MIND NOT AT ALL

OUT? SIMON THE SHIP IS SINKING AND ABLAZE! HOW IN GOD'S NAME DO YOU PROPOSE WE LEAVE?

WE DO WHAT ANY COMPETENT CRIMINAL INVESTIGATOR DOES

WE FOLLOW THE RATS

FROM A SINKING SHIP! OF COURSE!

THE BLAST MUST HAVE -

TURN RIGHT! -- I

-- MUST HAVE SPLINTERED THE HULL SOMEWHERE, AND THAT

LEFT! LEFT!

-- THAT WILL BE OUR EXIT!

OR NOT! SIMON, IN CASE WE DON'T MAKE IT THERE'S

RIGHT!

THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT YOU TO KNOW! I --

-- I'M HIDING SECRET POWERS FROM YOU RIGHT! THAT I'M NOT ALLOWED TO USE ANYWAY ESPECIALLY IF THIS LEFT! HORRID BARONESS SOMEHOW FILCH RIGHT! THEM FROM ME IF I DO AND WHAT SHE WANTS IS A QUESTION I CAN'T EVEN ASK WITHOUT TAPPING MY HAND AND -- AND -

WELL?

-SIGH-

YOUR HANDWRITING IS ATROCIOUS

HOW MONUMENTALLY INFORMATIVE WITH ACCESS TO DATA LIKE THAT, NO WONDER I'M BRILLIANT.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT RATS IN LARGE, WRITHING MASSES?

WHY?

BECAUSE

-PFAH!-

WE'RE LIKELY TO CRAWL THROUGH SOME. BE CAREFUL. THEIR CLAWS AND TEETH ARE ESPECIALLY

ALL RIGHT!

SQUEE SQUEE SQUEE SQUEE SQUEE SQUEE

THEY'RE NOT PLAGUE-CARRIERS HOWEVER THAT'S A COMMON MISCONCEPTION IT'S THEIR THOUSANDS OF FLEAS

THOUSANDS OF FLEAS?

I WAS MERELY TRYING TO EASE YOUR MIND

OH, THANK YOU!

ON THREE ONE TWO

SQUEE SQUEE SQUEE SQUEE SQUEE SQUEE SQUE

SO TO REVIEW THE *FACTS* WE LEARNED HOW THE *OPIATES* WERE BEING SMUGGLED INTO PARTINGTON WE FOUND *METAL PHIALS* SECRETED WITHIN THE CARGO OF *FISH* WE CRACKED THE *CASE*

WE

YES HOWEVER WOULD WE HAVE ESCAPED A *FLAMING BOAT* ABSENT YOUR MASTERY OF *LINGUISTICS*

NOTHING WAS *CRACKED* I *REMIND* YOU THAT WE CANNOT *TRACE* THE SMUGGLED GOODS TO THEIR *SOURCE* WITHOUT FURTHER *EXAMINING* THEM

AND ALL THE DRUG LADEN *FISH* WERE *DESTROYED* IN THE

=PFFHT!=

WHY DO *ALL* OUR CASES INVOLVE *RATS* AT ONE POINT OR ANOTHER?

I HADN'T NOTICED

DO

EXPLOSION

EMMA? EMMA, WHY ARE YOU *SMILING*?

WE'VE *DISCUSSED* SMILING

SIMON OH, *SIMON* WHEN I LOOK AT YOU, DO YOU KNOW WHAT I *SEE*?

OH! OH, *NO!* SIMON, THERE WERE POLICEMEN ABOARD THE SHIP--!

MISS *BISHOP!* IF YOU'RE SUGGESTING WE

FISH

NOW ON THE *DOCKS*

PERFECTLY *SAFE*

PERFECTLY

=AHEM=

CAUGHT UNDERNEATH YOUR *CLOAK* AS WE THRASHED THROUGH THE *CARGO HOLD*, NO DOUBT

I ASSUME THIS PUTS US BACK ON THE *TRAIL*?

DESPITE SIMON'S IMPATIENT TOE-TAPPING, I REPAIR TO MY QUARTERS FOR A QUICK BATH AND CHANGE OF CLOTHING

I SUPPOSE I COULD BE MOVING MORE QUICKLY, BUT I KNOW WHAT COMES NEXT

VOTES FOR WOMEN

TWELVE GALLONS OF ACID IN A FOUR GALLON JAR

I HATE FISH

OTTO PRESSMONK, ESQ.

CHEMIST

I HATE CLAMS AND I HATE OYSTERS AND I HATE COD AND I HATE --

SHRIMP?

NICE MOCK THE SHORT MAN

WHO SAID I WAS REFERRING TO YOUR ENTIRE BODY?

DELIGHTFUL STILL PUTTING THE "SUFFER" IN SUFFRAGETTE, I SEE

AS DAEDALIAN AS SIMON CAN BE, EVEN A HEAD THAT INFLATED CAN HOLD ONLY SO MUCH INFORMATION

WHICH IS WHY HE MAINTAINS A WORLDWIDE NETWORK OF AGENTS - SPECIALISTS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS. OTTO'S THE ONLY ONE I'VE EVER MET WHO'S LESS PERSONABLE THAN SIMON

I CAN'T BELIEVE WE USED TO DATE

SO I'M SEARCHING FOR ELEMENTS FOREIGN TO OUR SHORES

SOMETHING I CAN TRACE TO A SPECIFIC REGION WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL

NOT ASKING FOR MUCH, ARE WE?

FIRST, TO SEPARATE THE DRUG'S COMPONENTS. JUST A DRAM OF THERON UM IODINE

I THINK YOU MEAN IODIDE

MY MISTAKE

HMMM. AN UNUSUAL CHAIN OF FERROUS MOLECULES.

SIMON, I'LL BE A WHILE

TELL YOUR SECRETARY TO COME BY LATER FOR MY FINDINGS.

AND ORDER HER TO REPLACE MY CHAIR

CERTAINLY THERE MUST BE A TOY SHOPPE SOMEWHERE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

AND I AM NOT SIMON'S SCRIVENER! I AM HIS PARTNER!

ASS STANT

READ THE NEWSPAPERS

EXAMINE THE BUSINESS CARDS

QUITE THE CHANGE FROM YOUR OLD PARTNER SIMON. WHAT WAS HIS NAME AGAIN? LIGHTSOMETHING

LIGHTBOURNE

THE WAY SIMON SPEAKS IT SPREADS GOOSEFLESH ACROSS MY SKIN

I'VE HEARD RUMORS EVERYONE'S HEARD RUMORS. BUT I'VE NEVER ASKED SIMON DIRECTLY ABOUT MY PREDECESSOR OR THE WAY HE DIED

BACK TO IT, OTTO. EMMA WILL SIT YOU AROUND NOON

AND NO, I DON'T WISH TO TALK ABOUT IT

ABOUT WHAT?

YOU WERE PREPARING TO INQUIRE ABOUT LIGHTBOURNE

YOU ARE GOOD

ON THE WALK BACK TO HEADQUARTERS, SIMON GROWS INCREASINGLY **REMOTE** AND **WITHDRAWN**.

I DON'T TAKE IT **PERSONALLY**, EVEN AFTER I'M FORCED TO GUIDE HIM BY THE **ELBOW**.

I DO, HOWEVER, WALK HIM THROUGH THE OCCASIONAL **PUDDLE** JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT.

UNDER THOSE RARE CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE SIMON IS **TRULY** PERPLEXED, HE HONES HIS CONCENTRATION BY CLAMBERING INSIDE A BEASTLY CONTRAPTION OF HIS OWN DESIGN--

A SORT OF **REVERSE BATHYSPHERE** DESIGNED TO DEPRIVE HIM OF EXTRANEOUS **SENSORY INPUT**.

HE CALLS IT HIS "**THINK TANK**" WHILE I CANCEL HIS **APPOINTMENTS** FOR THE DAY...

HE PREPARES FOR **IMMERSION**.

HMMM.

CAN'T YOU SLIP INTO A **HOT BATH** LIKE EVERYONE **ELSE**?

SIMON?

WHAT? OH.

I WASN'T **LISTENING**.

SHOCKING. YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT THAT, THAT **RECEPTACLE**.

YOU'RE **WORRIED** FOR ME.

A BIT.

DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT WE CALL THAT?

AN EGREGIOUS OUTPOURING OF IRKSOME **EMOTION**?

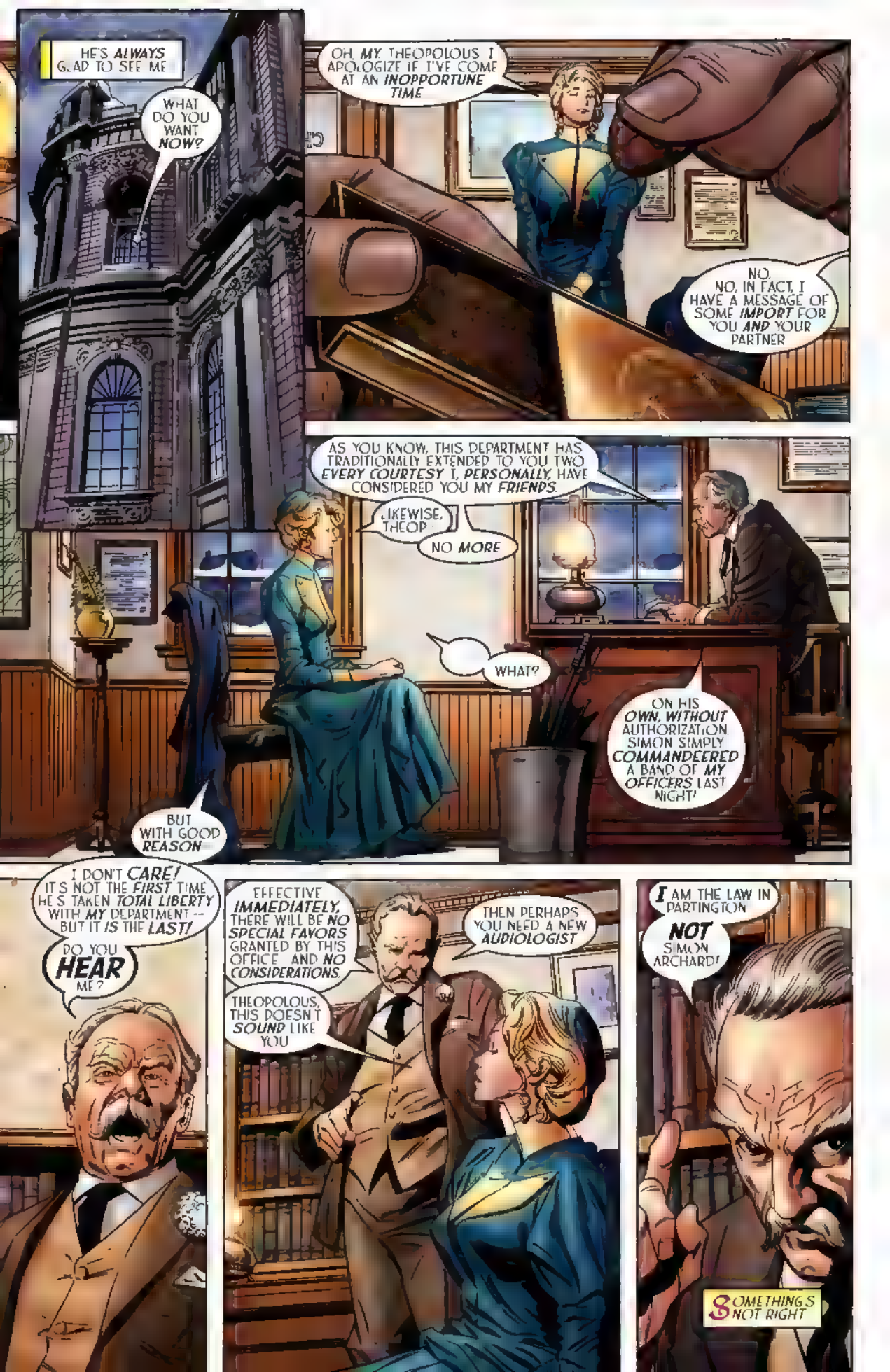
PRECISELY.

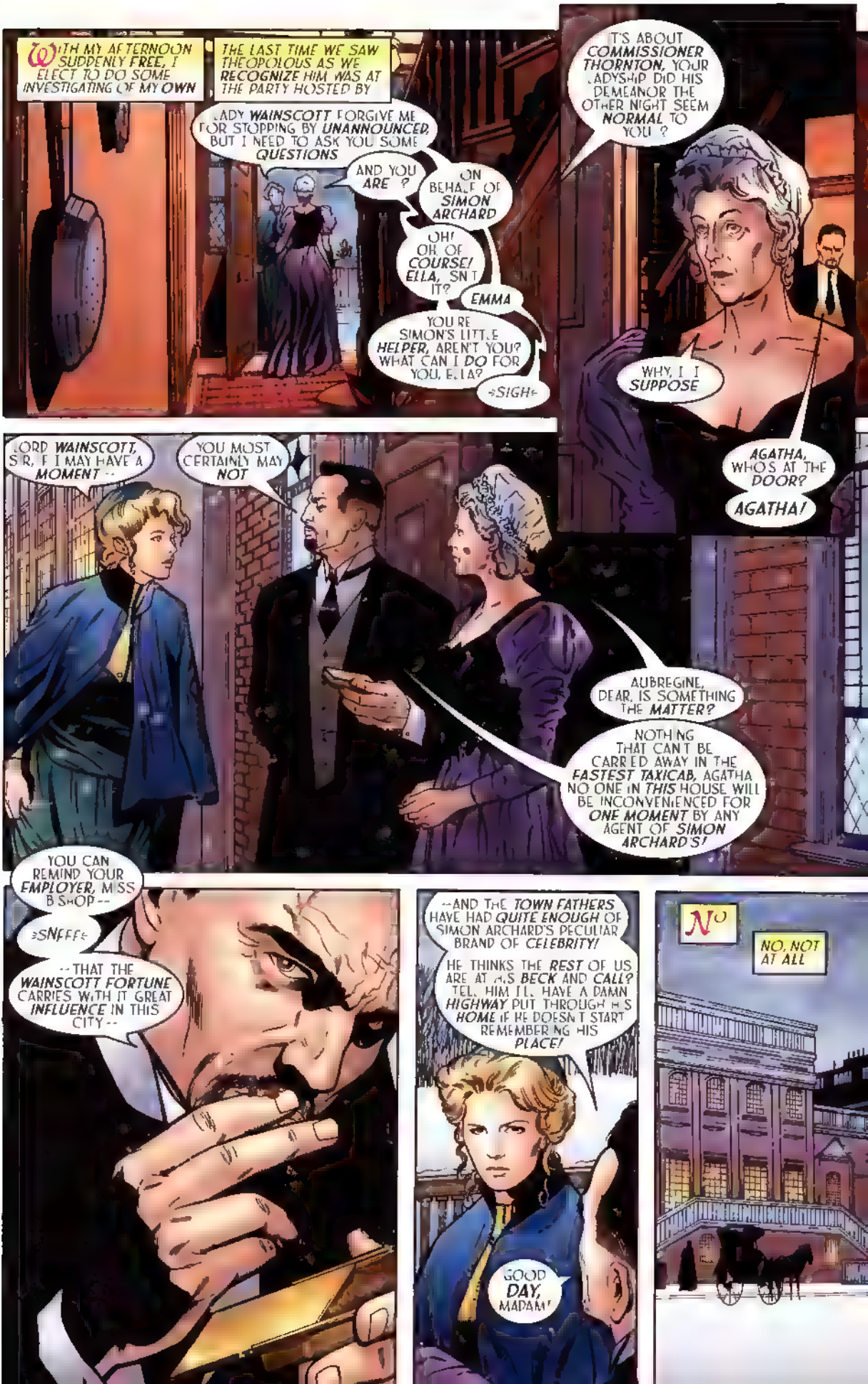
WHEN SHALL I SAY YOU'LL BE **AVAILABLE** AGAIN?

WHEN I **AM**.

MEANWHILE, YOU'LL LUNCH WITH THE **COMMISSIONER**?

WITH **PLEASURE**, UNLIKE **SOME** IN YOUR ACQUAINTANCE.


HE'S ALWAYS GLAD TO SEE ME
WHAT DO YOU WANT NOW?
OH, MY THEOPOLOUS, I APOLOGIZE IF I'VE COME AT AN INOPPORTUNE TIME
NO, NO, IN FACT, I HAVE A MESSAGE OF SOME IMPORT FOR YOU AND YOUR PARTNER
AS YOU KNOW, THIS DEPARTMENT HAS TRADITIONALLY EXTENDED TO YOU TWO EVERY COURTESY. I, PERSONALLY, HAVE CONSIDERED YOU MY FRIENDS.
LIKEWISE, THEOP
NO MORE
WHAT?
ON HIS OWN, WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION, SIMON SIMPLY COMMANDEERED A BAND OF MY OFFICERS LAST NIGHT!
BUT WITH GOOD REASON
I DON'T CARE! IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME HE'S TAKEN TOTAL LIBERTY WITH MY DEPARTMENT -- BUT IT IS THE LAST!
DO YOU HEAR ME?
EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY, THERE WILL BE NO SPECIAL FAVORS GRANTED BY THIS OFFICE AND NO CONSIDERATIONS.
THEOPOLOUS, THIS DOESN'T SOUND LIKE YOU
THEN PERHAPS YOU NEED A NEW AUDIOLOGIST
I AM THE LAW IN PARTINGTON
NOT SIMON ARCHARD!
SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT


WITH MY AFTERNOON SUDDENLY FREE, I ELECT TO DO SOME INVESTIGATING OF MY OWN
THE LAST TIME WE SAW THEOPOLOUS AS WE RECOGNIZE HIM WAS AT THE PARTY HOSTED BY
LADY WAINSCOTT FORGIVE ME FOR STOPPING BY UNANNOUNCED, BUT I NEED TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS
AND YOU ARE ?
ON BEHALF OF SIMON ARCHARD
OH! OH OF COURSE! ELLA, ISN'T IT?
EMMA
YOU'RE SIMON'S LITTLE HELPER, AREN'T YOU? WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, ELLA?
-SIGH-
IT'S ABOUT COMMISSIONER THORNTON, YOUR LADYSHIP DID HIS DEMEANOR THE OTHER NIGHT SEEM NORMAL TO YOU ?
WHY, I, I SUPPOSE
AGATHA, WHO'S AT THE DOOR?
AGATHA!
LORD WAINSCOTT, SIR, IF I MAY HAVE A MOMENT --
YOU MOST CERTAINLY MAY NOT
AUBREGINE, DEAR, IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?
NOTHING THAT CAN'T BE CARRIED AWAY IN THE FASTEST TAXICAB, AGATHA NO ONE IN THIS HOUSE WILL BE INCONVENIENCED FOR ONE MOMENT BY ANY AGENT OF SIMON ARCHARD'S!
YOU CAN REMIND YOUR EMPLOYER, MISS BISHOP --
-SNEEZE-
-- THAT THE WAINSCOTT FORTUNE CARRIES WITH IT GREAT INFLUENCE IN THIS CITY --
-- AND THE TOWN FATHERS HAVE HAD QUITE ENOUGH OF SIMON ARCHARD'S PECULIAR BRAND OF CELEBRITY!
HE THINKS THE REST OF US ARE AT HIS BECK AND CALL? TELL HIM I'LL HAVE A DAMN HIGHWAY PUT THROUGH HIS HOME IF HE DOESN'T START REMEMBERING HIS PLACE!
GOOD DAY, MADAM!
NO
NO, NOT AT ALL

I CAN HEAR THAT SOW PRACTICALLY *MOOING* WITH FRUSTRATION

I ALMOST EXPERIENCE A PITYING? IS THAT THE WORD? PITYING

AFTER ALL HER ONLY FUTURE *NOW* LIES IN BECOMING MY FAVORITE *PLAYTHING*

I'M SORRY, ANTAEUS MY *SECOND* FAVORITE

OR *THIRD*, PUTTING *SIMON* IN THE COUNT

NOW, WHO HERE HAS SOMETHING *FOR* ME ?

MY! I *HAVE* HIRED WELL, HAVE I NOT? AN *EMPTY* SYRINGE MEANS YOU'VE ELIMINATED ONE *SMALL* COMPLICATION FOR US EXCELLENT

ALL GOES, AL GOES. ANTAEUS, FINISH DELIVERING THE LITTLE *BOXES* TO THE *BIG* MEN

AND TRY NOT TO *BREAK* ANY THIS TIME? IN FACT, *SAVE* YOUR STRENGTH

USSZZZZ?

YOU ARE MY EYES AND *EARS* IN THIS DREADFUL CITY GO DO *THAT*

NEEDULL?

OH, NO THERE IS NO *NECESSITY* AT THE *MOMENT* FOR DIRECT? *DIRECT* ACTION, YES?

THERE MUST BE *PATIENCE* THIS YOU *UNDERSTAND?*

GOOD BOYS

AS PROMISED AN HOUR RETURN TRIP TAKES ME PAST OTTO'S LAB TO RETRIEVE HIS REPORT

Oh!

THERE WON'T BE ONE

SERGEANT WHO DID THIS?

LOOKS TIME SHE DID IT 'SSELF, MIZ BISHOP

WE GOT AN ANONMOUS TIP WHAT BROUGHT US HERE AN FOUND HIM THUSLY

PROBY REACHED TOO HIGH, HE DID SIMPLY LOST IS BALANCE AN THE CABNET TUMBLED ATOP IM

A RIGHT UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENT

ACCIDENT, MY LACE SHEVIS

MYSTER EXPLOSION SINKS

THE BARONESS. I DON'T KNOW WHY, OR HOW

BUT SHE'S BEHIND THIS I KNOW IT

BUT BY THE TIME I MAKE MY WAY BACK TO 47 STRAND TO TELL SIMON OF MY FINDINGS.

SIMON?

SIMON?

HE'S NOWHERE TO BE FOUND

STILL, OTTO WILL NOT GO UNAVENGED. SINCE SIMON LEFT NO NOTE TO THE CONTRARY, HE'LL NO DOUBT RETURN PROMPTLY

THEN AGAIN

A DAY LATER, I DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO BE WORRIED FOR OR ANGRY AT SIMON

WHILE HARDLY A PARAGON OF WARMTH, HE'D STILL WANT TO BE PRESENT AS WE BURY ONE OF HIS ASSOCIATES. THIS I KNOW

TOO WELL

HAS THE BARONESS ALSO GOTTEN TO SIMON SOMEHOW, WITHOUT DISCLOSING HER TRIUMPH TO ME?

I DOUBT IT. JUDGING BY HER BEHAVIOR AT THE FIRE, SHE'D WANT ME TO KNOW

THAT'S WHAT I KEEP TELLING MYSELF

NO AUTOPSY WAS NECESSARY. THE AUTHORITIES, FRANKLY, COULDN'T WAIT TO GET OTTO INTO THE GROUND. BLESS HIS SOUL, HE COUNTED AMONG HIS COMPATRIOTS ONLY A HANDFUL OF SIMON'S FELLOW OPERATIVES. BARTLESBY THE MOUCH... THE ABBESS LADYBIRD NELL... A FEW OTHERS.

HARDLY A FITTING FUNEREAL PARTY FOR EVEN A MAN OF OTTO'S SOUR DISPOSITION IF HE HAD ANY FAMILY

--GATHERED HERE TO PAY FINAL RESPECTS TO THE DECEASED--

I GOT HEARIN ABOUT THIS IN THE PENNYSHEETS, Y BLOODY SHORTWANK

LEF ME QU'TES AN ITCH T' SCRATCH WI' YE BROTHER OTTO, I

I'D BE AMAZED

A SOUL RELEASED FROM THIS MORTAL COIL TO BATHE IN THE LIGHT OF--

LEAVIN' OUR MUM WI'OUT TWO COINS T' RUB TOGETHER FER EVEN TH' WARMTH OF T'

YER NIECES N' NEPHEWS ALLUS IGNORED THO I BEGS YE T' PUT FOOD IN THEIR HUNGRY MOUTHS

MADAM, OUR CONDOLENCES WE HAD NO IDEA OTTO HAD A SISTER

BUT REGARDLESS OF WHATEVER QUARRELS YOU KNEW, THE TWO OF YOU, WE IMPLORE YOU TO SPEAK NO ILL OF THE THE

THE DEAD? THERE AIN'T NO WORDS FOUL ENOUGH YE THINK YERSELVES H'S FRIENDS? NO

THESE ARE ALL WHAT'S FIT T' SHARE THEIR TIME WI' OTTO PRESSMONK!

LET THE MAGGOTS BE WITH THEIR OWN!

OH, GOOD LORD! GET THEM OFF! GET THEM OFF!

WHILE THE ABBESS AND THE PRIEST RELIEVE THEMSELVES OF THE CONTENTS OF THEIR STOMACHS, WE TRY OUR BEST TO SALVAGE OTTO'S DIGNITY
BUT THERE ARE TOO MANY OF THE WRIGGLING LARVAE AND THEY'LL FIND OTTO SOONER THAN LATER. ANYWAY WITH GRIEF MORE PROFOUND THAN BEFORE, WE EASE OTTO INTO THE EARTH AND SING A PRAYER THOUGH WE'RE ONE VOICE SHORT
SIMON
WHERE ARE YOU?
CONTINUED
NEXT ISSUE

The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa
Mark WAID WRITER
Butch GUICE PENCILER
Michael PERKINS & the Agents of Archard INKERS
Laura DePUY COLORIST
Dave LANPHEAR & TROY PETERI LETTERERS

SAMPLE OUR

When visiting in Partington

ly opened Fresh Fruit an

THE RAIN IN ESPL

PLAIN: Be ter Eloc

through our Spec

around the greater

D'Armata School

capabilities and

WHAT

No single eve

There will be

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TO READ

BETWEEN

THE LINES?

Allow our agents to delineate the unclear define the vague and spot the shadows framing your pedestrian lives. Only our clear line expertise can clarify the inky miasma in which you may be mired.

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DePUY COLOU[illegible]CHS

[illegible] at a loss for words [illegible] door of the [illegible] extricate you from the dilemmas of today's [illegible] matter your budget, no matter [illegible] the [illegible] can be yours with [illegible] custom craftspeople to make you over in the manner [illegible] society and healthy [illegible] be the laughingstock of your neighborhood whence you [illegible] your neighbors will flock to your side, eager for your pearls of wisdom

In Acknowledgement of The Fine Administration & Craftsmen at CrossGeneration Comics, Incorporated

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The PENNY ARCADIAN

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DOWNTOWN TRAGEDY

OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

THE CITY'S FAVORITE SON, HIS MIND IS RAZOR SHARP

EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY, HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

MIRANDA CROSS

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR, SHE EXHIBITS A CERTAIN MAGIC

SHELF CLAIMS DWARF

OTTO PRESSMONK, *Chemist, C dger*

PRESSMONK'S FUNERARY PROCESSION, A HANDFUL OF ASSOCIATES ATTENDED

Partington Chemist Otto Pressmonk fell fatal victim to an office accident yesterday afternoon. Authorities found his diminutive body beneath a fallen cabinet inside Pressmonk's laboratory. He was 39 years of age

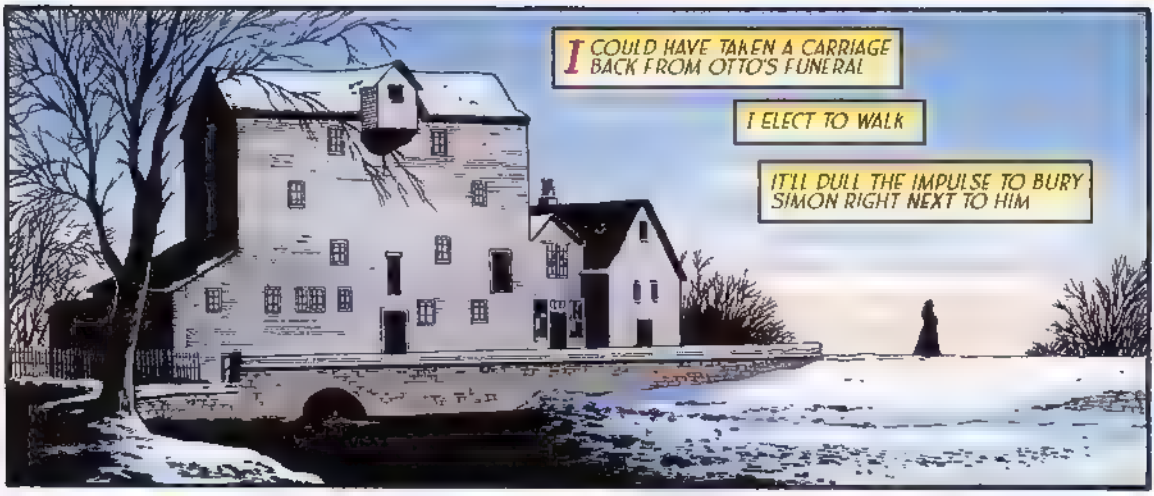
Given his reportedly repellent demeanor, that there were no witnesses to Pressmonk's death comes as no surprise to those who claim to have known the man Still, no less august a personage than Police Commissioner Thornton himself has ruled out the possibility of foul play and has issued an official statement to effect identical

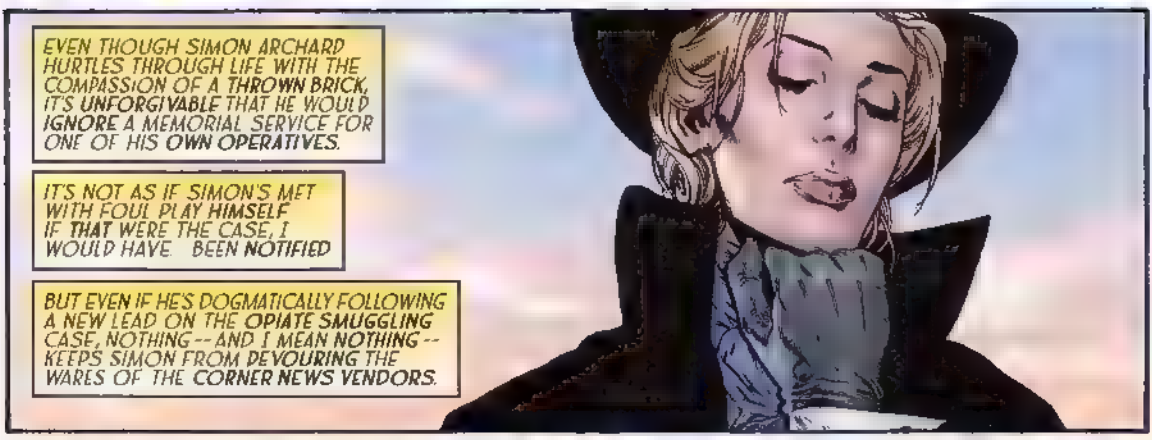
At Pressmonk's own request, as indicated in his personal papers ("I've been elbow-deep in chemicals all my [censored] adult life. I want to leave this [censored] world as pure as the day I was [censored] born"), his unenbalmed body was interred as quickly as possible. Services were held earlier today

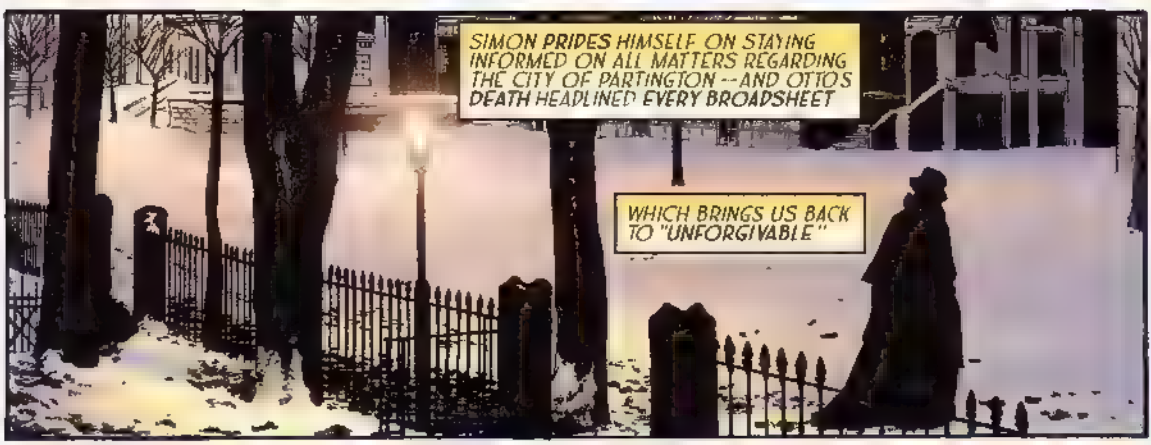
•••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

Ruse™ [illegible] ISSUE 3, JANUARY 2002 FIRST PRINTING Published by CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. Office of publication 4623 Tampa Road Suite 2400, Oldsmar, Florida 34677 CrossGen®, CrossGen Comics®, CrossGeneration®, and CrossGeneration Comics® are registered trademarks of CrossGeneration Comics Inc Ruse™, the CrossGen sigil™, and all prominent characters are ™ and © 2002 CrossGeneration Comics, Inc All rights reserved The entire contents of this book are ™ and © 2002 CrossGeneration Comics Inc The stories, incidents, and characters in this publication are fictional Any similarities to persons living or dead are purely coincidental With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reproduced in any form without the express written consent of CrossGeneration Comics, Inc PRINTED IN CANADA


I COULD HAVE TAKEN A CARRIAGE BACK FROM OTTO'S FUNERAL
I ELECT TO WALK
IT'LL DULL THE IMPULSE TO BURY SIMON RIGHT NEXT TO HIM


EVEN THOUGH SIMON ARCHARD HURTLES THROUGH LIFE WITH THE COMPASSION OF A THROWN BRICK, IT'S UNFORGIVABLE THAT HE WOULD IGNORE A MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR ONE OF HIS OWN OPERATIVES.
IT'S NOT AS IF SIMON'S MET WITH FOUL PLAY HIMSELF IF THAT WERE THE CASE, I WOULD HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED
BUT EVEN IF HE'S DOGMATICALLY FOLLOWING A NEW LEAD ON THE OPIATE SMUGGLING CASE, NOTHING -- AND I MEAN NOTHING -- KEEPS SIMON FROM DEVOURING THE WARES OF THE CORNER NEWS VENDORS.


SIMON PRIDES HIMSELF ON STAYING INFORMED ON ALL MATTERS REGARDING THE CITY OF PARTINGTON -- AND OTTO'S DEATH HEADLINED EVERY BROADSHEET
WHICH BRINGS US BACK TO "UNFORGIVABLE"

HOWEVER, ONCE I LAY EYES ON 47 STRAND ONCE MORE
SUDDENLY, BEATING AN EXCUSE OUT OF SIMON IS THE LAST THING ON MY MIND.
AS IT HAPPENS, WHILE I'VE BEEN BUSY CONDEMNING SIMON

SOMEONE ELSE HAS BEEN CONDEMNING HIS HEADQUARTERS.

WHAT THE DEVIL ?

OFFICER, WHAT'S THE *MEANING* OF THIS?

MISS *BISHOP*, IS IT? MISS BISHOP WE'LL HAVE *NAE TROUBLE* HERE FROM THE LIKES O *YOU*.

THE *LIKES* OF..."?

WAIT OVER THERE THE MEN GIVING THE *ORDERS*--

--THEY'RE THE *MAYOR* OF PARTINGTON - *AND* THE *BANKER*, WHO --

- DECONSECRATED OR *NOT, NEVER* SHOULD HAVE SOLD SUCH A *SACRED BUILDING* TO SUCH A *PROFANE MARPLOT!* MY MOST SINCERE *APOLOGIES*, MAYOR!

I *AGREE* IT'S A *SIN* TO SEE THIS CATHEDRAL GO FROM *NO* USE TO *ILL* USE PERTHANBY--

-- AND I'M *INCLINED* SIMPLY TO BURN IT TO THE *GROUND* TO ALLEVIATE THE STINK OF *HERESY* FROM ITS RAFTERS!

YOU *HEARD* ME, MISS BISHOP!

BOTH OF THESE MEN HAVE ALWAYS BEEN STAUNCH SUPPORTERS OF SIMON'S ACTIVITIES. THEIR SUDDEN TURNABOUT PERPLEXES ME

UNTIL I SEE THEM DIP SNUFF FROM BOXES OF A CHILLINGLY FAMILIAR DESIGN

..ONE THAT MARKS THEM AS GIFTS FROM THE BARONESS MIRANDA CROSS.. IMPORTER OF THE OPIATE HIDDEN IN THE SNUFF. A DRUG WHICH APPARENTLY ALLOWS HER SOME MEASURE OF CONTROL OVER THOSE WHO PARTAKE OF IT

AND WHERE, DEAR GIRL, *IS* YOUR EMPLOYER? I WAS LOOKING *FORWARD* TO *PERSONALLY* RUNNING HIM OUT OF *TOWN*..

WITH *YOU* NOT FAR *BEHIND!*

I *ASSURE* YOU, MAYOR I'VE NO MORE IDEA WHERE MY

PARTNER

IS THAN DO *YOU*.

..BUT AS THIS S THE MOST LOGICAL SITE FOR HIS *RETURN*, I'VE *EVERY RIGHT* AS A *LAW-ABIDING CITIZEN* TO WAIT FOR HIM *HERE*

IF YOU WISH ME TO *LEAVE*, YOU'LL HAVE TO *PHYSICALLY REMOVE* ME FROM --

--OH!

THIS WAY MISSY AND STOP *SQUIRMING* I HAVE A TOUCH OF THE *SCIATICA*

SCIATICA?
IT'S A *PINCHED NERVE* CON-
I KNOW WHAT SCIATICA IS, YOU OX! PUT ME DOWN!
WITH PLEASURE
SHE'S ALL *YOURS*, BOSS
ENJOY
I WOULDN'T *COUNT* ON IT BARONESS! YES, I *KNOW* IT'S *YOU!*
AND I *SWEAR* TO YOU BY ALL THAT IS *HOLY* THAT YOU WILL DERIVE *NO PLEASURE* FROM MY *PRESENCE!*
THIS IS *NEWS?*
I'M *OVERPAYING* YOU
TAP TAP
SIMON!
OF COURSE NOW.
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT THE *BARONESS MIRANDA* ?
WHERE HAVE YOU *BEEN?"*
CERTAINLY *SOMEONE'S* BEHIND OUR CURRENT DIFFICULTIES
WHERE HAVE YOU *BEEN?"*
THE BARONESS IS AS VIABLE A *SUSPECT* AS *ANY*
WHERE HAVE YOU *BEEN?"*
PARTICULARLY SINCE SHE AND THE *OPIATE* HIT OUR SHORES *SIMULTANEOUSLY"*
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
OUT
WHAT HAVE YOU *LEARNED?*
THAT YOU'RE A *HORSE'S ARSE. ALSO* NOT *NEWS*
SIMON, MIRANDA CROSS HAS BEEN HANDING OUT *GIFT TINS* OF DRUG-LACED *SNUFF* THE *POLICE COMMISSIONER* AND LORD *WAINSCOTT* ARE NOW IN HER *THRALL*
WORSE, SHE'S MADE THE *BANKER* AND THE *MAYOR* HER PUPPETS, AS *WELL* --
-- BECAUSE MEN SUCH AS *THOSE* ARE THE PILLARS OF *SOCIETY* IF PARTINGTON'S *POWER BROKERS* ARE DOING HER *BIDDING*, WE MAY AS WELL CHANGE THE CITY'S NAME TO *CROSSTON*
I WISH THIS CAME AS LESS OF A *REVELATION* TO YOU I *ASSUMED* YOU WERE *INVESTIGATING* THIS *VERY NOTION. THAT* WOULD BE YOUR *ONLY EXCUSE* FOR MISSING OTTO'S *FUNERAL*
IT WAS *BLEAK* AND *HORRIBLE*, SIMON. SOME OLD *CRONE* EVEN THREW A FISTFUL OF --OF--
MAGGOTS?
YES! *MAGGOTS* INTO THE *COFFIN* AND --
-- WAIT HOW DID YOU KNOW *THAT?*
BECAUSE THEY TOOK ALL *NIGHT* TO *GATHER*
NO!
SIMON, *NO!* THAT WAS *YOU?* IN *DISGUISE?*
THAT OTTO WAS *MURDERED*, I HAVE NO *DOUBT*
BUT SINCE WE'RE BEING LED TO BELIEVE *OTHERWISE*, I CHOSE TO KEEP MY INVESTIGATION *LOW-PROFILE*
SO WHAT HAVE *YOU* LEARNED?
NOTHING
YET
THAT'S WHAT THE *MAGGOTS* ARE FOR
AND...? THAT CRIES *OUT* FOR EXPLANATION!
YOU WON'T LIKE IT
LET ME BE THE JUDGE OF --
=SNIFF=
=SNIFF=
SIMON, IS THAT *CAMPHOR?*
YES. I'VE SPREAD SOME UNDER MY NOSE. I SUGGEST YOU DO THE SAME
WHY?

=HHUH=
=HHHHUH=
EXPLAIN TO ME *AGAIN*
=HHHUH=
WHY *I'M* NOT PLAYING LOOKOUT AND THE
=HHHUH=
CARRIAGE DRIVER ISN'T DOING THE *DIGGING?*
YOU *WANTED* TO BE A DETECTIVE
CHONK
HELLO, OTTO
NOT MUCH FURTHER TO *GO*. GOOD *THING*. IT'LL BE *DAWN* SOON
DO YOU WANT TO BE THE ONE WHO HOLDS OPEN THE *COFFIN* OR THE ONE WHO RETRIEVES THE *MAGGOTS?*
THERE IS NO GOOD ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION
I'VE BEEN THINKING, THOUGH IF OTTO WAS, IN FACT, MURDERED, IT WAS BECAUSE WE WENT TO HIM IN SEARCH OF *ANSWERS*
WHICH MEANS *WE* WERE BEING *WATCHED*
COULD THAT STILL BE THE *CASE?*

POSSIBLY

I THOUGHT WE HAD A LOOKOUT!
CHOK
THEN THIS MAN WAS HERE WHEN WE ARRIVED WHO SENT YOU, REAPER? THE BARONESS?
DIE
THAT TELLS ME NOTHING
AND ME WITHOUT A WEAPON
HMM IF ONLY I HAD A LARGE, HEAVY METAL LANTERN...!
WHAT?
OH!
FWAK
GHAAAH!
NYAAAHHH---
DEAD?
PASSED OUT FROM FRIGHT
I CAN'T IMAGINE WHY

NOT ALL OF SIMON'S OPERATIVES ARE ON A **PAYROLL**. MANY OF THE LESS FREQUENTLY **CONSULTED**--PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO ARE WELL-TO-DO **THEMSELVES**--LEND THEIR SERVICES IN EXCHANGE FOR PAST **FAVORS**.

HEADMASTER **WARREN SUMMERSBY** OF **PARTINGTON UNIVERSITY**, FOR EXAMPLE.

AT SIMON'S BEHEST, SUMMERSBY KEEPS WATCH OVER HIS BEST AND BRIGHTEST STUDENTS WITH AN EYE TOWARDS WHICH ONES MAY, IN TIME, BECOME EITHER **ALLIES** OR **ADVERSARIES**.

AVAILED NEITHER OF **OTTO'S** LABORATORY NOR HIS **OWN**, SIMON ASKS FOR AND IS GRANTED TEMPORARY ACCESS TO THE SCHOOL'S FACILITIES, BUT

WE HAVEN'T MUCH **TIME**. THE **STUDENTS** WILL ARRIVE SHORTLY, AND I'D RATHER NOT HAVE TO DEAL WITH THEIR **FAWNING ADMIRATION**. IT'S QUITE THE **NUISANCE**.

WHAT?

NOTHING

THE DAMAGE TO OTTO'S **BODY** WAS **INCONSISTENT** WITH THE SIZE OF THE SHELF THAT *FELL* ON HIM. SINCE THERE WAS NO **AUTOPSY** AND OTTO WAS, FOLLOWING HIS PROCLAIMED WISHES, BURIED **SANS ENBALMING**.

THE MAGGOTS WERE MY WAY OF GLEANING ENOUGH FLUID FROM OTTO'S **SYSTEM** TO DETERMINE IF HE WAS **POISONED** RATHER THAN **CRUSHED**.

AND HE **WAS**.

MOREOVER, THE LARVAE AND THIS **SMUGGLED PHIAL** TEST CONSISTENTLY WITH EACH **OTHER**. THIS INDICATES THAT OTTO WAS INJECTED WITH A FATAL DOSE OF THE VERY OPIATE THE BARONESS IS USING TO MANIPULATE HER **VICTIMS**.

ASTOUNDING

OTTO **CONTINUES** TO AID US FROM BEYOND THE **GRAVE**. HE--

AAAAH! SIMON, THEY'RE **FLYING**--!

TKK

NO. NO, THEY'RE **CLINGING** TO THE **METAL RIM** OF THE **MAGNIFYING LENS**.

THE DRUG MADE THEM **MAGNETIC**? THAT'S--

FASCINATING

I WAS GOING TO SAY *REVOLTING* BUT HOW DOES THAT FIT IN WITH THIS NOTION OF **MENTAL CONTROL**?

WE'LL ASK **ADELINE**.

HOW MANY OPERATIVES DO YOU **HAVE**?

AND DISTRACT HER *MOTHER* WHILE I ARRANGE A *CONFERENCE*

DISTRACT? HOW? I DON'T EVEN *KNOW* THE WOMAN!

YOU'RE *THEATRICAL*. YOU'LL THINK OF SOMETHING.

SPLENDID

LISTEN FOR TWO THUMPS

TWO WHAT?

Oh, I *THOUGHT* I HEARD SOMEONE OUTSIDE. MAY I *HELP* YOU?

YES, YES, I'M ADELINE'S *TEACHER*

MY ADELINE? SHE'S *HOME SCHOOLED!*

AND BY *"TEACHER,"* I MEAN HER *MUSIC* TEACHER

SHE PLAYS NO *INSTRUMENTS*

SHE *SINGS* FOR ME.

SHE HAS A VOICE LIKE *GRAVEL*

EXACTLY. MAY I COME IN? *THENKYEW*

I DON'T *-SIGH-*

SHE'S UPSTAIRS. SHALL I *SUMMON* HER?

GRACIOUS, *NO!* LEAVE THE DEAR TO HER *PLAYTHINGS*

'JOIN HANDTH, MY FRIENDTH! MADAM TREBLINKA WILL BE YOUR GUIDE TODAY.'

"...YOUR GUIDE TO THE REALM ECTOPLATHMIC!"

I'M *THORRY*, MITH WINKLE! WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO POUR YOU THOME *TEA*, FIRTHT?

'AND A THCONE, IF YOU WILL?

THERTAINLY NOW EVERYONE *CONTHENTRATE...*

"THPEAK, OH DEARLY DEPARTED OF THE THPIRIT WORLD! WHAT METHAGE DO YOU HAVE FOR UTH TODAY ?"

BEWARE OF THE *SCONES.*

YOU'LL *FORGIVE* ME, DEAR, BUT YOU LOOK A *FRIGHT*

Oh, I *KNOW*. *RUFFIANS. THREE* OF THEM ATTEMPTED TO *MUG* ME JUST *OUTSIDE*

MY *WORD!* IN *THIS* NEIGHBORHOOD?

I AM *FINDING* THESE DAYS, MA'AM, THAT INIQUITY AND PERNICIOUSNESS HIDE IN THE MOST *UNLIKELY* OF VENUES.

POOR THING NOW, ABOUT THESE *VOICE LESSONS*.. YOU SAY MY *HUSBAND* APPROACHED YOU ON ADDIE'S BEHALF? THAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE HIM AT *ALL*

WELL YOU KNOW HOW HE CAN *BE*

Ah. SO TRUE SO *TRUE*

WHEW

THIMON THAT WATH YOU

THAT WATH MEAN!

WE'VE MET, HAVEN'T WE?

BY THE WAY, IF YOU WERE TRULY A PSYCHIC YOU WOULD HAVE PREDICTED MY ARRIVAL

I AM TOO PTHYCHIC YOU'RE ATH BAD ATH MOMMY.

YOU'VE THEEN WHAT I CAN DO, THIMON. I FOUND THE GHOTHT OF MARPON LANE FOR YOU!

WE'VE GONE OVER THIS, ADELINE. THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS GHOSTS.

Heh.

WHAT YOU EXPERIENCE WHEN YOU GO INTO A SELF-HYPNOTIC STATE --

TRANTH

--IS AN INCREASED ELECTROMAGNETIC PERCEPTION OF SOME AS-YET-UNNAMED ENERGY.

THAT'S WHY I'VE COME TO YOU, TODAY, IN FACT. TELL ME

HAVE YOU ANY EXPERIENCE WITH LEY LINES?

MAGNETIC OR TOPOGRAPHICAL?

MAGNETIC

OKAY. THE WHOLE PLANET ITH RINGED WITH THEM. THEY RE IRREGULAR, BUT ONE RUNTH THTRAIGHT THROUGH PARTINGTON IT TH VERY POWERFUL

NOW, SUPPOSING A MAN'S BRAIN WERE LACED WITH PARTICLES SENSITIVE TO THAT MAGNETISM.

WHAT WOULD THAT DO TO HIM?

Hmm.

ADDIE?

I'M THINKING. BUT HE MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO, AT LEATHT NOT RATIONALLY.

DEPENDING ON HOW MUCH HE HAD IN HIM, THE MAGNETITHM WOULD THERTAINLY ALTER THE BRAIN'TH ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELD.

THANK YOU, ADELINE. YOU MAY RETURN TO YOUR DOLLIES AND THEIR EXPLORATION INTO THE METAPHYSICAL.

AS USUAL, IT MIGHT BE BEST IF YOUR MOTHER HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF MY VISIT

AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF HER WALKING IN?

NO.

THUMP THUMP

HEAVENS! WHAT'S THAT RACKET?

ADDIE?

ADELINE BETHESMA DEWINTER! WHAT HAVE YOU GOTTEN INTO NOW?

ANSWER ME!

AND THAT.

IS MY CUE TO LEAVE

WHAT AN ORDEAL

STILL, IT MIGHT BE WORTH IT IF I CAN SEE SIMON SHINNY DOWN A DRAINPIPE

MANAGING EDITOR *MURCHISON*. MAY I *HELP* YOU?

SIMON? I WAS *HOPING* YOU'D --

PENNY ARCA

OF *COURSE* I'VE HEARD! WHERE ARE YOU *CALLING* FROM?

THE LINE IN OTTO'S *OFFICE* IS STILL FUNCTIONING, RANDOLPH AT LEAST FOR THE *NONCE*

LISTEN TO ME. I'M NOT READY TO EXPLAIN QUITE *HOW*-- BUT THIS BUSINESS WITH THE *TOWN FATHERS* UP IN ARMS *AGAINST* ME --IT'S THE DOING OF *MIRANDA CROSS*. TAKE MY *WORD* FOR THIS

MIRANDA'S A CLEVER WOMAN, EMMA. AND *VERY* DANGEROUS.

HER OPIATES QUITE LITERALLY *SHORT-CIRCUIT* THE MINDS OF HER *VICTIMS* BY CREATING A *MAGNETIC PULSE* IN THEIR *BRAINS*...

MAKING THEM *INORDINATELY* SUGGESTIVE TO HER *WHIMS* AND *COMMANDS*. SHE'S WEAVING A *WEB* OVER THE *CITY*...AND I WON'T *HAVE* IT.

YOU KNOW WHERE SHE *LIVES*. LEAD US THERE

NO. SIMON'S *FURIOUS*, BUT I CANNOT ALLOW HIM TO CONFRONT MIRANDA *DIRECTLY*. HE HAS NO *IDEA* THE EXTENT OF HER POWER

YET EVEN AS I CONCOCT SOME *WAY* TO KEEP THEM *APART* --

--SHE MAKES THAT *IMPOSSIBLE* SIMPLY BY TURNING A *STREET CORNER*.

SIMON! *EMMA!*

THE COINCIDENCE OF A CHANCE *MEETING* IN A CITY THIS *LARGE*. *IMAGINE* MY *SURPRISE!*

SIMON, I'VE BEEN YOUR AGENT SINCE I HELD A *REPORTER'S BEAT*. OF *COURSE* I BELIEVE YOU.

WHAT CAN I DO TO *HELP*?

PUT SOME MEN ON THIS DISCREETLY

AND BANNER THIS IN THE AFTERNOON EDITION. "SIMON ARCHARD LINKS *DISINGENUOUS ALLEGATIONS* TO *BARONESS CROSS*."

START THE SNOWBALL ROLLING *HER* WAY.

HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THE *EVENING* PAPER, OLD CHAP. THE *AFTERNOON* ARCADIAN IS JUST NOW HITTING THE *STREETS*.

AND YOU'RE *ALL OVER* IT

OH, PLEASE

ANTAEUS, LOOK WHO IT IS!
BRINDROD'S GUANO SHOVEL CO
SIMON, DON'T MAKE A SCENE!
YOU NEEDN'T WARN ME AS IF I WERE A SCHOOLCHILD, EMMA
I'M NOT WARNING HIM I'M PROTECTING HIM
I AND I ALONE KNOW THAT THE BARONESS POSSESSES SORCEROUS ABILITIES THE LIMITS OF WHICH I'VE NOT SEEN TESTED. I'VE WITNESSED THEM WITH MY OWN EYES.
PLEASE TO MAKE NO FURTHER EXCUSES FOR IGNORING ME, DEAR MAN YOU PROMISED TO COME BY AND PERUSE THE COLLECTION OF CLIPPINGS I HAVE ASSEMBLED REGARDING YOUR EXPLOITS, YES?
I'VE NOT DISCLOSED HER CAPABILITIES TO SIMON, NOR DO I WISH TO NOT ONLY WOULD I HAVE TO FACE HIS SKEPTICISM--
-- BUT TO TELL HIM WOULD BE TO ADMIT I HAVE CERTAIN POWERS OF MY OWN--
BARONESS, REMOVE YOUR HANDS FROM MY PARTNER OR I SHALL REMOVE THEM FOR--
--POWERS THE BARONESS PROMISED TO THIEVE FROM ME THE NEXT TIME THEY'RE USED. I CANNOT EVEN TOUCH HER WITHOUT RISKING A VERY TELLING DISPLAY OF ENERGY.
YOU.
TROUBLE, EMMA, DARLING? FEEL FREE TO. I BELIEVE THE PHRASE IS, "PUT ME IN MY PLACE"
ONLY AS I SEE FIT, MIRANDA
BEGGING YOUR PARDON, BUT WOULD YOU TWO PLEASE REPEAT THAT EXCHANGE? I CAN BARELY HEAR IT OVER THE CLAMOR OF MYSTERIOUS SUBTEXT
I FEAR, HOWEVER, THAT THE BARONESS WOULD GLADLY EXPOSE US BOTH IF IT MEANT SPURRING ME TO ACTION
SUBTEXT? YOU MEAN YOU REALLY AREN'T AWARE, SIMON? WOULD YOU CARE FOR AN EDUCATION?
SIMON KNOWS ALL HE NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT YOU, BARONESS.
I HIGHLY DOUBT THAT. WHY, THERE ARE ALL SORTS OF SECRETS LURKING UNDER SIMON'S VERY NOSE. FOR INSTANCE--
SIMON, WE'RE WASTING VALUABLE TIME HERE. LET'S GO.
SHED NO CROCODILE TEARS AT MY DEPARTURE, BARONESS. I FEEL QUITE CONFIDENT THAT OUR PATHS WILL INTERWEAVE QUITE SOON
IN THE MEANTIME, YOU'LL HAVE TO BE CONTENT WITH YOUR CLIPPINGS.
Oh, I SHALL. IN FACT, ANTAEUS HAS FOUND YET MORE NEWS REGARDING THE GREAT SIMON ARCHARD
FRESH OFF THE PRESS.
The PENNY ARCADIAN
Copiously Illustrated
Afternoon Edition. Price One Penny
FAMED DETECTIVE MURDERS GRAND DAME
MON ARCHARD SLAYS LADY PENELOPE WAINSCOT
ANDSOME BOUNTY OFFERED

THE LADY WAINSCOTT? BUT THAT'S NOT--

TRUE? IT'S QUITE *FULL* OF *ONE* TRUTH

THAT SHE WOULD, OF *COURSE*, HAVE *MURCHISON* AS *WELL*. COME *ALONG*, EMMA

..THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET *MUCH* WORSE

THAT'S HIM!

I *SEE* IM!

ALLUS *FIGGERED* HE'D TURN SOMEDAY, I DID

POLICE! *POLICE!*

GRAB HIM!

HOY, NOW! I'LL GET HIM! I GOTS A *FINE REWARD* RUNNIN' RIGHT *TOWARDS* ME!

Ohhh--! THE *MONSTER!*

UUULLPp--!

CONGRATU..ATIONS ..SE IT TO BUY A NEW *CAB*

CLIMB *IN!* *HURRY!*

IF THE *COMMISSIONER* IS MIRANDAS PUPPET AS *WELL*, THEN HIS *OFFICERS* ARE DOUBTLESS CONVERGING ON US EVEN AS WE-

FWEEEEEEEE

HE'S GETTIN *AWAY!* *AFTER* .M!

WAINSCOTT *MANOR?*

SIMON, HAVE YOU TAKEN LEAVE OF YOUR *SENSES?* PERHAPS THE ALLEGED *CRIME SCENE* ISN'T THE BEST PLACE TO *BE AT THE MOMENT ?*

AS OPPOSED TO WHERE *ELSE?* BESIDES, THIS PLACE WILL BE *TEEMING* WITH CLUES THAT WILL *EXPOSE* THIS PATHETIC FRAME, EMMA

I DOUBT THE *BODY* IS STILL HERE, BUT

BUT I COULD BE *WRONG!*

LADY WAINSCOTT!

SIMON? *ELLA?*

THIS IS AN UNEXPECTED SURPRISE! WHAT BRINGS THE TWO OF *YOU* HERE?

YOU DO, YOU'RE IN *DEADLY DANGER*, AGATHA-- MOST LIKELY FROM YOUR *OWN HUSBAND* WHERE *IS* HE?

I WISH I *KNEW*, DEAR I COULD HAVE *SWORN* HE SAID HE WAS GOING INTO TOWN FOR SOME *SNUFF*, BUT I MUST HAVE *MISHEARD*

I FOUND QUITE AN *ABUNDANCE* IN THE *GIFT BOX* THE BARONESS SENT HIM

THAT'S RIGHT DON'T BREATHE A *WORD*, DEAR SIMON BUT THIS OLD BIDDY ENJOYS A PINCH OR TWO *HERSELF* FROM TIME TO --

AIEEEEEE!

AGATHA!

STOP RIGHT THERE--
--IN THE NAME OF THE LAW!
OH, NO NO
WELL DONE, MIRANDA, YOU VITUPERATIVE HARRIDAN THIS WASN'T MERELY A FRAME IT WAS A TRAP --
-- ONE SO PERFECT THAT ITS HEADLINE WAS ALREADY WRITTEN
YOU WITNESSED IT YOURSELVES, MEN! SIMON ARCHARD KILLED A WOMAN IN COLD BLOOD, AND BY GOD --
--HE'LL HANG FOR IT BY THE DAWN'S LIGHT!
Your Presence is Requested
for the
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of Our Drama
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OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

THE CITY'S FAVORITE SON, HIS MIND IS RAZOR-SHARP

EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY, HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

MIRANDA CROSS

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR, SHE EXHIBITS A CERTAIN MAGIC

SIMON ARCHARD SLAYS LADY PENELOPE WAINSCOTT

HANDSOME BOUNTY OFFERED

HER MACHIAVELLIAN MALEFACTOR

LADY PENELOPE WAINSCOTT, AN ARTIST'S RENDITION

Earlier today, policemen acting as eye-witnesses spotted famed criminologist Simon Archard setting aflame the body of Lady Penelope Agatha Wainscott, bringing about an instantaneous and no doubt agonizing death.

As no motive for this heinous act can be determined, doctors and alienists fear that Archard's brilliant but historically erratic mind has finally slipped into insanity, meaning that any of Partington's residents could be the detective's next victim. All local citizens are advised to beware and defend themselves accordingly.

A sizeable reward for the capture of Archard and his female accomplice has been offered by the widower Wainscott.

•••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

Rose [illegible] by CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. [illegible] CrossGen [illegible] CrossGen Comics® CrossGeneration® and CrossGeneration Comics [illegible] Rose™ the CrossGen sig™ [illegible]

SIMON, INSIDE! THE POLICE -- ARE NOT YET CLOSE ENOUGH
NOT CL ? SIMONNNNN !
SHUT YOUR EYES
THAT WON'T MAKE THEM GO AWAY! SIMON, THEY'VE PRACTICALLY GOT THE NOOSE AROUND YOUR NECK! WE MIGHT LOSE THEM INSIDE THE HOUSE!
WHAT A NOTION. Oh IF ONLY I WERE GENIUS ENOUGH TO HAVE ARRIVED AT IT
SHUT!
Oh
FWAMPH
GHAAAH!
MY EYES !
FLASH POWDER. WHEN AM I GOING TO START TRUSTING YOU?
I'M SURE THERE ARE ANCIENT PROPHECIES SOMEWHERE THERE BETWEEN BEING BLINDED AND LOCKED OUT, THAT SHOULD STALL THEM
THOOM THOOM
BUT NOT FOR LONG! RUN!

YOU REALIZE THIS FABRICATION OF MURDER HAS MIRANDA CROSS FINGERPRINTS ALL OVER IT

AND SHE SHALL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE LADY WAINSCOTT WAS A MEDDLESOME BIDDY, BUT THAT ONLY BARELY WARRANTS DEATH BY SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION

HEAD FOR THE SERVICE ENTRANCE

I HAVE NO IDEA WHICH WAY THAT IS!

GOOD THEN NEITHER WILL OUR PURSUERS FASTER!

MY WORD! HELP! POLICE!

OH, LOOK

THE BUTLER'S IN ON THIS TOO

SORRY, REGINALD

SIMON, THEY'RE NEARLY UPON US!

THERE HE IS! STOP HIM!

SIMON, THIS WAY! WE CAN

OH, NO

OH, GOD, NO! SIMON, IT'S IT'S --

IT'S WHAT?

IT'S NO EXIT AT ALL, MURDERER! AFTER HIM, MEN! HE'S JUST LOST HIS ONE CHANCE AT ESCAPE!

THE ENTIRE YARD IS ONE GIANT HEDGE MAZE! WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY TO THAT, YOU CONTUMELIOUS OUTLAW?

PERFECT

AN INTERESTING CHOICE OF WORDS. I MIGHT HAVE GONE WITH, "DEAR LORD, WE HAVEN'T A PRAYER!", BUT THAT'S JUST *ME*.

I WAS AFFORDED A *BRIEF GLANCE* FROM *ABOVE* AS WE CROSSED THE *REAR PATIO*, SIMON. I *THINK* WE TAKE OUR NEXT *LEFT*

NO

OF COURSE WHAT I *GLIMPSED*, *YOU* COMMITTED TO *MEMORY* WELL. *DONE*. THEN YOU *KNOW* THE TRUE PATH.

NO

AH. AND JUST WHEN I THOUGHT IT WAS *HOPELESS*

THIS MIGHT BE A GOOD TIME FOR YOU TO REMOVE YOUR *SCARF*

WHY ON *EARTH*--?

PROPHECIES...?

FINE

NOW I'M A *STONE*

WH--

FINE

THERE YARE Y NO GOOD

OH. I SEE

I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT YOU'VE BEEN *PRACTICING*, I HOPE?

A BIT

YOU, *TOO*, MISSY! THE PAIR O YAS COMIN WITH

⇒NNGH!⇐

THMOX

ACTUALLY, I COULDN'T DO THAT AGAIN EVEN IF I *TRIED*. SIMON, JUST *ADMIT* WE'RE *LOST!*

YES. THAT'S CORRECT. THE IMMUTABLE LAWS OF *PHYSICAL GEOMETRY* HAVE *SHATTERED* LIKE A *GLAZED TEACUP* BEFORE OUR *VERY EYES* AND WE ARE POSITIVELY *DOOMED*.

DEAR LORD, WE REALLY *HAVEN'T* A--

WHAT?

IT'S SO PAINFULLY *SIMPLE* AN OBSERVATION, EMMA, THAT IT OFTEN *ESCAPES* EVEN THE MOST *ARDENT* PUZZLE MAVEN.

THERE IS A *SECRET* TO NAVIGATING LABYRINTHS, AND IT IS *THIS*: NO MATTER THEIR *COMPLEXITY*, FROM ENTRANCE TO EXIT

THEY ARE NO MORE AND NO LESS *ONE LONG LINE*, BROKEN ONLY BY GAPS FOR *ENTRANCE* AND *EGRESS*

THEREFORE AS, THANKFULLY, *NO* CONSTABULARY REALIZE

BY FOLLOWING ONE WALL *FAITHFULLY* UPON *ENTERING*, WHILE YOU MAY PASS IN AND OUT OF THE OCCASIONAL *BLIND ALLEY*

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE *NOT* TO BE LED TO THE MAZE'S *EXIT*

WHOK

AND ALL THAT MAY LIE BEYOND

THE NEXT TIME COMMISSIONER THORNTON DISPATCHES A MAN TO COVER AN *EXIT*.

...HE'D BE WISE TO CHOOSE ONE WITH A *THICKER SKULL*.

COME ALONG. WE HAVEN'T MUCH *TIME*

SIMON, NATURALLY, IS RIGHT. THE BARONESS IS NO LONGER **TOYING** WITH US. CLEARLY, IF SHE'S FRAMED SIMON FOR **MURDER**, SHE NEEDS US DECISIVELY OUT OF HER WAY.

MY SUGGESTION THAT WE LAY **LOW** IS MET WITH A GRAND ROLLING OF SIMON'S **EYES**. INSTEAD, THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE AFTERNOON, SIMON MAKES SURE WE'RE SEEN STEALING **CARRIAGES**, HAUNTING THE **RAILWAY STATION**, AND DELVING INTO THE **CITY SEWERS**. (AGAIN WITH THE **RATS**. LOVELY.)

IT'S A GAMBIT **WELL-PLAYED**. BY **EVENING**, EVERY NEWSPAPER IN **TOWN** REPORTS THAT SIMON (AND HIS "ACCOMPLICE ELLE B'SHOP"--I SIMPLY **MUST** CONTRACT A **PUBLICITY AGENT**) ARE MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO **FLEE** PARTINGTON FOR LANDS **UNKNOWN**. THE BARONESS HAS GOTTEN HER **WAY**.

OR **HAS** SHE...?

LIGHT THE *FIRE*, ANTAEUS

AND WITH IT, LIGHT THE *FUTURE*

FOR TOMORROW'S *DAWN* WILL BRING A *NEW DAY* TO THE CITY OF PARTINGTON

OR A NEW *NIGHT* OR A NEW *GLOOM* OR A *FISCAL PANIC* OR *CRIME SPREE* OR A THUNDERSHOWER OF *TOAD CORPSES* STICKING THE SIDEWALKS AND COBBLESTONES IF I AM SO DESIRING

I KNOW. YOU NEEDN'T SAY IT. *FICKLE* IN MY *AMUSEMENTS*, I AM

AFTER *TONIGHT*, I WILL HOLD THIS CITY IN MY *HAND*. ANTAEUS. ALLOW ME TO FORMALLY INTRODUCE YOU TO ITS *FINGERS*.

IAN PERTHABY, PARTINGTON'S RICHEST *BANKER*

AUBREGINE WAINSCOTT, ITS MOST INFLUENTIAL *BUSINESSMAN* AND *ICHE* RECENT *WIDOWER*

MAYOR *CHARLESTON BULLROND*

POLICE COMMISSIONER *THEOPOLOUS THORNTON*

DING DONG

AND THAT WOULD BE MAKING FIVE

NOT YET

MREET?

BECAUSE THE IDENTITY OF MIRANDA'S *FINAL* GUEST SHOULD BE *MOST* OBVIOUS WHO ELSE BUT

EDITOR RANDOLPH MURCHISON, THE INK OF THE *PENNY ARCADIAN* STILL *WET* BENEATH HIS *MANICURE DO* ENTER FREELY AND WITHOUT *FEAR*, DEAR SIR

YOU HAVE BRINGED NO, *BROUGHT* BROUGHT A LITTLE SOMETHING *EXTRA* FOR ME, HAVE YOU?

AS YOU *REQUESTED*, BARONESS MIRANDA. MORE *NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS* FOR YOUR *COLLECTION*

SHEAVES OF NEWSPRINT FROM *FOREIGN SHORES* REGARDING THE SLEUTH

WHO IS BEST LEFT SPOKEN OF SOME *OTHER* DAY COME ALONG MUCH TO DO.

CLIPPINGS

CNNN BRRTH

NEVER MIND. IT'S AS I *SUSPECTED*. MIRANDA HAS THE TOWN FATHERS *GORGONIZED*, AND SHE'S ONLY JUST *BEGINNING* HER MACHINATIONS

CNNN BRRTH

EXACTLY HOW TO *STOP* IT?

CNNN BRRTH

AGREED. ADELINE WAS *RIGHT*. BUT HOW BEST TO DEAL WITH THE *FIRE*?

CNNN BRRTH!

CNNNNN'T BREATHE, I SA--

...HEEE- THANK YOU.

HIDE IN *THERE*, EMMA. YOU'LL BE *FINE*

SIMON, WHAT'S *HAPPENING*?

NOTHING *GOOD*. THE *NARCOTICS* MIRANDA'S BEEN IMPOSING ON THOSE FIVE MEN WHEN CARRIED THROUGH THE BLOODSTREAM TO THE *BRAIN*, DEPOSIT *FERROUS TRACES* TO CREATE A *MAGNETIC PULSE*

THAT *PULSE*, WHEN ATTUNED TO THE *LEY LINES* RUNNING THROUGH PARTINGTON, APPARENTLY ALLOWS MIRANDA A CERTAIN MEASURE OF *HYPNOTIC CONTROL* OVER THOSE SO *TAINTED*

A MEASURE SHE MEANS THIS NIGHT TO *PERMANENTLY STRENGTHEN* BY FEEDING HER SUBJECTS *MORE* OF THE DRUG *HERE* AROUND THAT ODD *BLUE FLAME*

THE VERY SPOT WHERE PARTINGTON'S MAGNETIC LEYS *CONVERGE*

HORRIBLE FASCINATING, BUT HORRIBLE

YOU'VE NOTICED THAT THE BLUE FLAME IS ALSO HER MURDER WEAPON

A COMBUSTION TRIGGERED BY THE SELFSAME NARCOTICS REMEMBER AGATHA ADMITTED TO SAMPLING THEM HOWEVER UNWITTINGLY, JUST BEFORE SHE DIED

HOW MIRANDA'S AN TRIGGER IMMOLATION FROM AFAR IS AT THIS POINT A MYSTERY OF SCIENCE

BUT IT'S NOT OUR PRIMARY CONCERN JUST NOW WE NEED TO DISRUPT THE CEREMONY A FEAT BEGUN BY DIVIDING THE ENEMY

WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO, PRAY TELL, WITH CONCEALING ME INSIDE A SUIT OF ARMOR?

MY PLAN REQUIRES SOME SORT OF DIVERSION

WHAT DID YOU HAVE IN

TAK

SIMONNNNNNNNNNNN

=GASP=

WHAT IN THE--?

ANTAEUS, KEEP WATCH WHILE I TAKE INVESTIGATION!

WHO'S THERE? WHO?

WHEN I AM FINDING

WRONG ENEMY THAT LEAVES THE UGLIER ONE TO GUARD THE FLAME

=SIGH=

WOULD THAT FORTUNE SMILE UPON US FOR A CHANGE

AND SOON!

REALLY SHOULD HAVE OPENED MY OWN DETECTIVE AGENCY
NO WORRIES, SIMON... NNGH- THE FLOOR BROKE MY FALL. TAPESTRIES DON'T WELL HOLD THE WEIGHT OF ARMORED SUITS, YOU KNOW
SIMON, I COULD POSITIVELY KILL YOU AT THIS MOMENT
YOU'LL FORGIVE ME
BUT THAT JOB HAS BEEN TAKEN, YOU OVEROFFICIOUS HAYBAG
AS I RECALL, YOU HAVE SOME MAGIC OF YOUR OWN. FEEL FREE TO EXPLOIT IT TO ITS UTMOST
IT WILL NOT SAVE YOU
FWOOM
KRAK
NNNGH!
YOU LUMBERING BRUTE. CAN YOU EVEN SEE YOUR FEET FROM WAY UP THERE?
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT
EMMA! THIS WAY! WE MUST TEND TO THE FIRE! WE--
HRRGGH!
KILL ARCHARD
KILL ARCHARD
KILL ARCHARD
KILL ARCHARD

BEFORE THE BARONESS ARRIVED, SIMON AND I ENJOYED NUMEROUS ADVENTURES FRAUGHT WITH PERIL, TINGED WITH DANGER
THEY WERE EASY TO ENJOY BECAUSE NO ONE WAS AT RISK, NOT REALLY
BEFORE THE BARONESS ARRIVED
NOW WE'RE GOING TO DIE
I CAN'T EVEN USE ANY OF THE PROTECTIVE MAGIC I'VE KEPT SECRET FROM SIMON BECAUSE THE SECOND I DO
I'LL TAKE IT FROM YOU JUST LIKE THAT AND TURN IT AGAINST YOU IN WAYS BEYOND YOUR FEEBLE IMAGININGS BUT DO TRY DO SOMETHING TO CHALLENGE ME THIS
THIS IS SIMPLY TOO EASY
EMMA, THE FIRE!
THE FIRE!
THIS IS NOT AT ALL THE WAY IT'S SUPPOSED TO END FOR US

SIMON, I'M COMING! I'LL TRY TO PUT IT OUT! I'LL --
AAAAAH!
EMMA NO!
DON'T EXTINGUISH IT --
--MAKE IT BIGGER!

BIGGER? DESPAIR HITS ME LIKE A FIST. THE REQUEST MAKES NO SENSE AT ALL. HAS SIMON HIMSELF SUCCUMBED TO MIRANDA'S NIGHTMARISH BIDDING?

OR SHOULD I SURRENDER MY FAITH TO HIS PREPOSTEROUS COMMAND?

HEAVEN HELP ME. EVEN IF I COULD ACT

OH, PLEASE. DO YOU TRULY WISH YOUR FINAL WORDS TO BE THAT MUCH OF A CLICHÉ? EMMA. I'll ALWAYS

SIMON

ALL THAT YOU KNOW, ALL YOU CAN CONCEIVE, I AND OTHERS LIKE ME ARE FATED TO CONTROL.

SIMON. FORGIVE ME

SO IS IT WRITTEN, SO SHALL IT BE. I MYSELF HAVE STUDIED BODEMENTS. MAPS OF DESTINY

BUT I DON'T KNOW IF I COULD

PROPHECIES

--TRUST YOU

SWELL THE BLAZE. HOW?

SNAK

AAAH!

BY ADDING FUEL

PERFECT. THERE YOU GO, SIMON. IN THE NICK OF TIME, I TWIST AWAY--

--FOR IN THAT HALF SECOND, THE ONLY LIGHT IN THE WORLD IS BLUE--

AAAAH!

YOU WITCH! YOU'LL NEVER--

GIVEN THE MADNESS AND CONFUSION SWIRLING ABOUT ME

HOW DARE YOU STRIKE ME?

--AS MIRANDA'S WRATH TURNS THE BONFIRE INTO A RAGING INFERNO!

YOU FOOL! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
I HAVE NO IDEA
WHICH IS WHY I'M HANGING THIRTY FEET IN THE AIR BY MY FINGERTIPS FROM THIS HEIGHT, GUARANTEED GRAVE INJURY SHOULD I FALL--
- WHEN I HEAR THIS
EMMA! LET GO! NOW!
TRUST ME!
=SIGH=
WHAT THE HELL IN FOR A PENNY--
WHERE
WHERE AM I?
IN FOR A POUND

BRILLIANTLY PLAYED, EMMA!
YOU'RE WELCOME
YOU WEIGH MORE THAN I THOUGHT
GOOD LORD SO HOT !
AS A TRAINED DETECTIVE, I ATTRIBUTE THAT TO THE FIRE LET'S ESCAPE WHILE WE CAN
WAIT! THE MEN--!
ARE EXPERIENCING A SUDDEN CLARITY.
THIS WAY!
SIMON ARCHARD? WHAT AM I--
--WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?
YOU'VE FREED THEM FROM MIRANDA'S GRASP?
I DIDN'T THE FIRE DID
INTENSE HEAT WEAKENS MAGNETIC FIELDS SEVERELY
ONLY BY TURNING THE CEREMONIAL PYRE INTO A GRAND CONFLAGRATION COULD I HOPE TO WAKE MIRANDA'S VICTIMS FROM THEIR ELECTROMAGNETIC HYPNOSIS
CONFLAGRATION INDEED
THE ENTIRE MANSION IS ABLAZE! NOTHING COULD SURVIVE IN THERE!
THE CLIPPINGS !
SIMON?
SIMON, HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?
COME BACK!

SIMONNNN!

THE BLAST SINGES OUR SKIN, BLINDS US ALL FOR HOURS.

HOURS DURING WHICH I DO NOTHING SAVE LISTEN FOR SIMON'S VOICE A CLEVER ENTRANCE LINE, A SNIDE REMARK ABOUT THE BARONESS.

IT NEVER SOUNDS

THE NEXT DAY, I SIFT THROUGH THE ASHES OF MIRANDA'S DESTROYED MANSION AND FIND NOTHING

NO SIGN OF HER, WHICH IS BAD

AND NO HINT OF SIMON, WHICH IS GOOD IF PERPLEXING

ALL CHARGES AGAINST SIMON HAVE BEEN CLEARED HIS HEADQUARTERS HAS BEEN RELEASED BUT IT'S HARD TO CELEBRATE THESE EVENTS IN HIS ABSENCE

I'VE GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO SIMON OCCASIONALLY VANISHING DURING AN INVESTIGATION

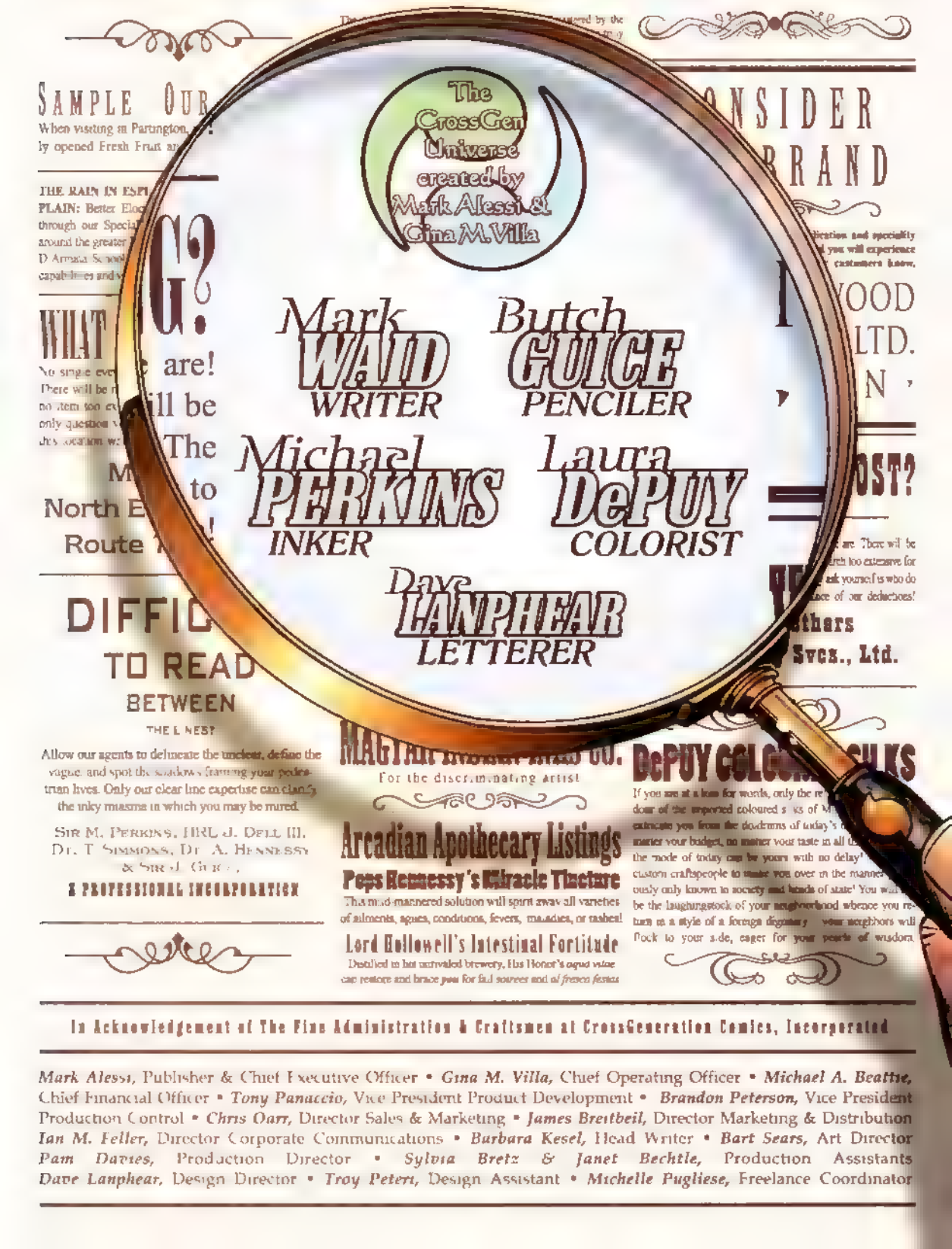
OFTEN HE DOES HIS BEST THINKING ALONE. THIS, HOWEVER, IS A NEW WRINKLE

DISAPPEARING TO BEGIN AN INVESTIGATION WITHOUT ME

I HEARD HIM HE WHISPERED SOMETHING ABOUT SOME SORT OF CLIPPINGS BUT IF THEY WERE IMPORTANT ENOUGH FOR SIMON TO RISK HIS LIFE

WHY AREN'T THEY IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO SHARE WITH HIS PARTNER?

IF HE THINKS THIS IS AN APPROPRIATE TIME FOR HIM TO TAKE A SOLO WALKABOUT, HE'S MISTAKEN
THIS TIME, I'M GOING TO FIND HIM NO MATTER THAT I HAVE TO PUT ALL OUR RESOURCES TO THE TASK
I'M GOING TO FIND HIM AND CONFRONT HIM ABOUT THIS
I'VE GOTTEN THE STRANGE FEELING AS THIS CASE HAS PROGRESSED THAT SIMON DOESN'T TRUST ME AS HE USED TO. BUT I CAN'T IMAGINE WHY
WHATEVER THE REASON MIGHT BE
LET'S HOPE IT'S NOT PERMANENT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SAMPLE OUR

When visiting in Partington, ... by opened Fresh Fruit ...

THE RAIN IN ESP... PLAIN: Better Eloc... through our Special... around the greater ... D Armata School ... capabilities and ...

WHAT ... G?

No single eve... are!
There will be ... ill be
no item too ex... The
only question w... to
this occasion w... !

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Route ...

DIFFIC...
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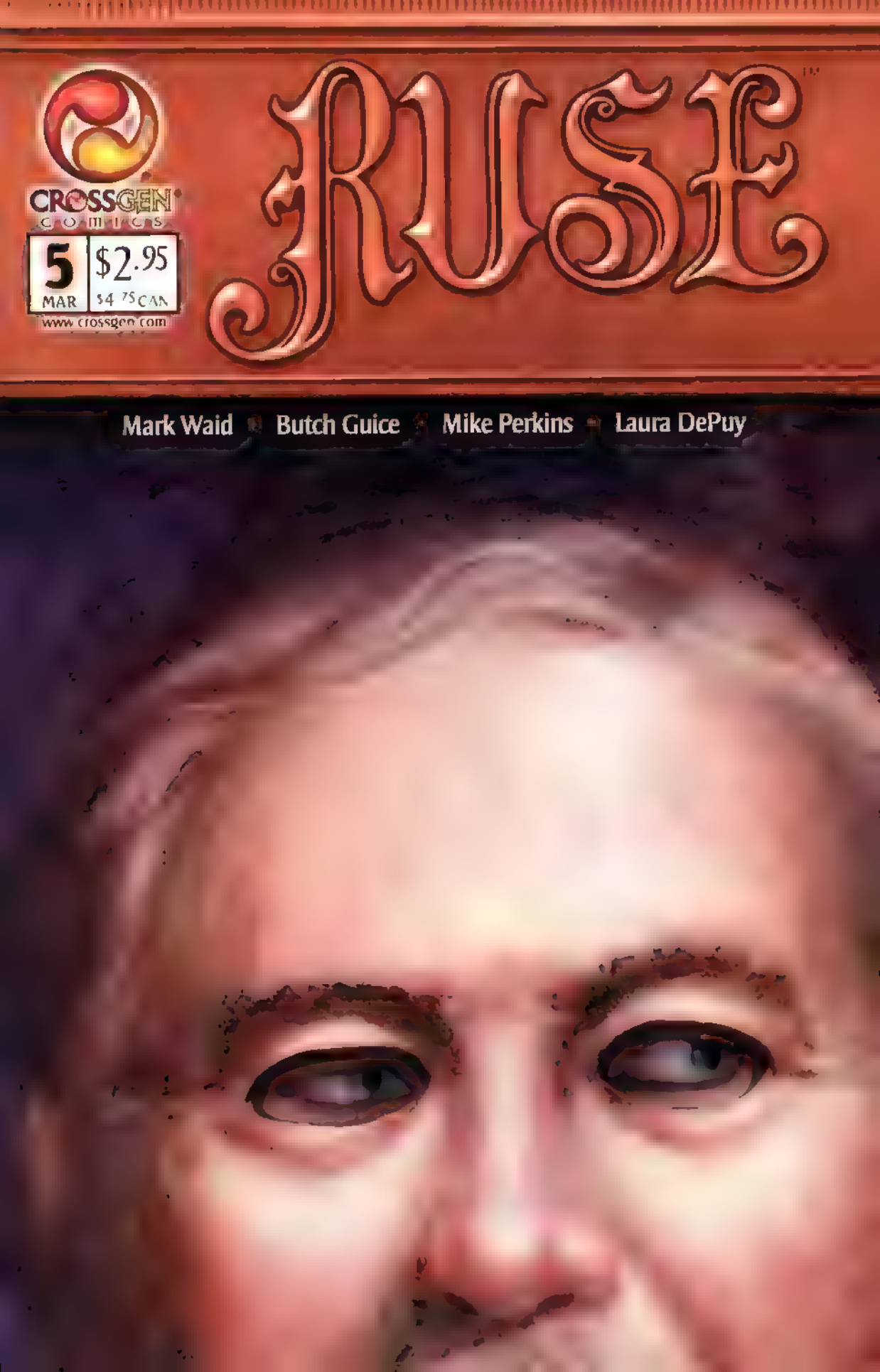
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The PENNY ARCADIAN

Copiously Illustrated — Afternoon Edition, Price One Penny

DOLLYMOP SLAYER STRIKES ANEW

OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

THE CITY'S FAVORITE SON. HIS MIND IS RAZOR-SHARP

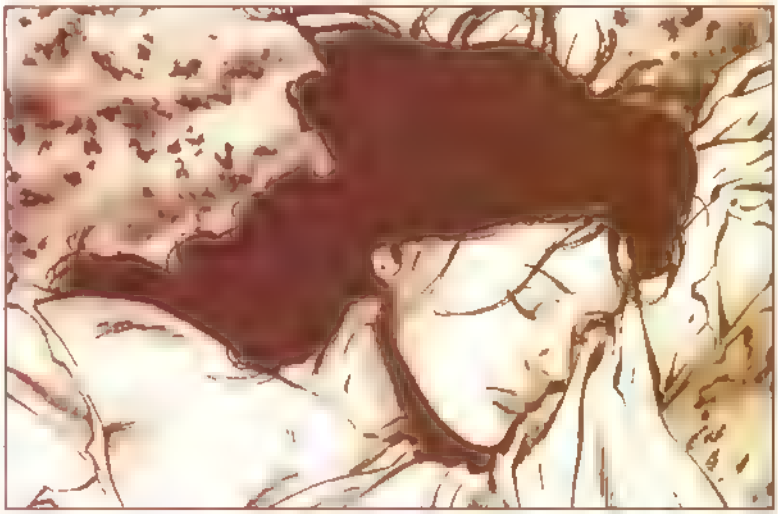
EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY, HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

PETER GRIMES

IN PAST A PUGILIST, UP-AND-COMING GENTLEMAN

EVENING'S LADIES JUSTLY FEARFUL



LATEST VICTIM DISCOVERED

WHERE IS ARCHARD?

In the early hours of yesterday morning another murder of a most revolting and ghoulish character took place in the Strunksfield district. This is the fourth which has occurred in this immediate neighbourhood within three nights, and the character of the mutilations leaves very little doubt that the murderer in this instance is the same person who has committed the previous ones, with which the public are fully acquainted. Ordinarily, the solutions to such crimes are the purview of the inestimable Simon Archard, but his strange yet apparent absence from the investigation is sharply felt, leaving the womenfolk of Partington feeling keenly vulnerable.

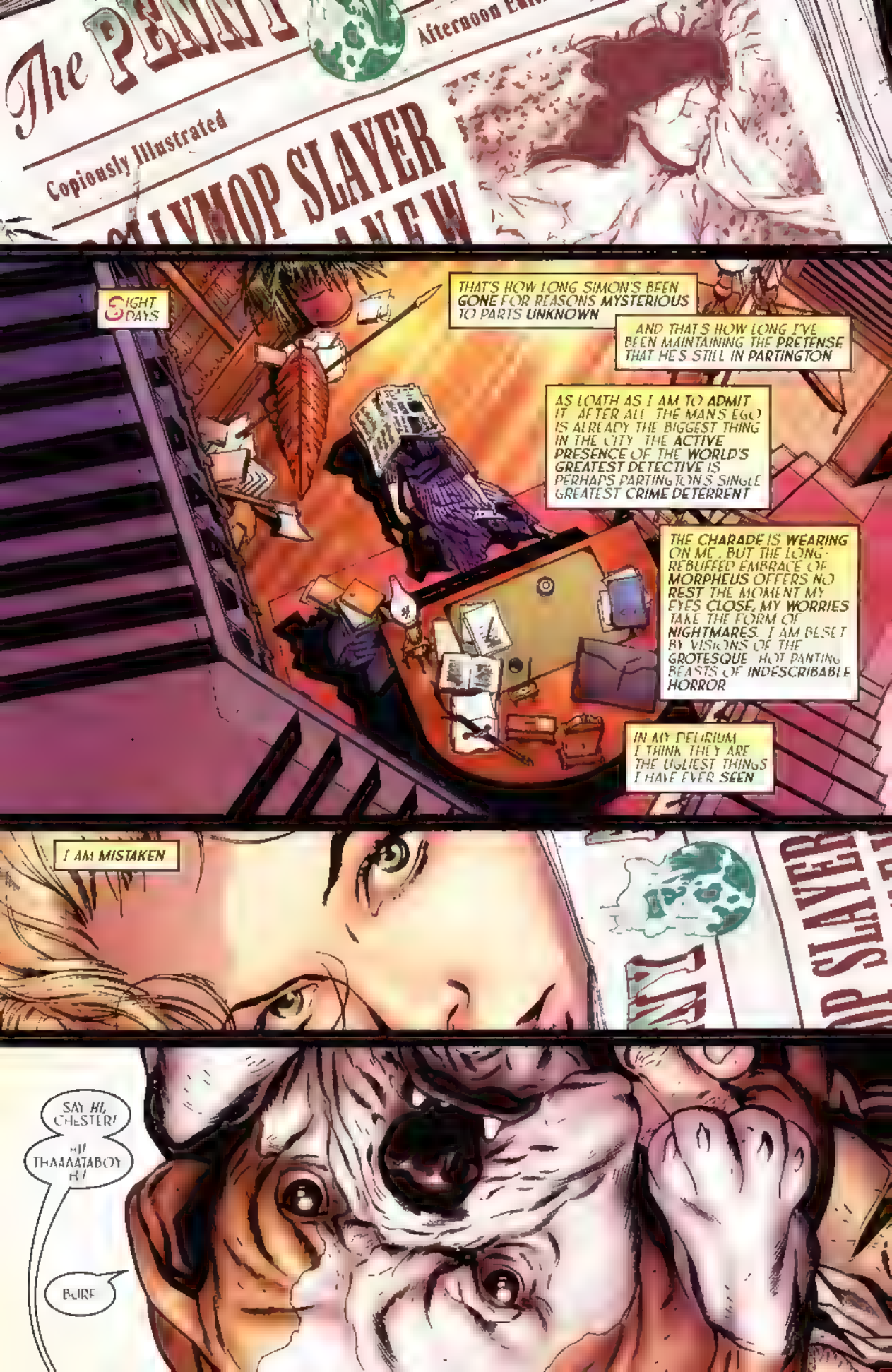
At a quarter to 4 o'clock Police-Constable Wharton, 97J, when in Dock's-row, Strunksfield, came upon the body of a woman lying on a part of the footway, and on stooping to raise her up in the belief that she was drunk he discovered that her throat was cut almost from ear to ear. She was dead but still warm. A nearby physician roused from slumber inspected the body at the place where it was found and pronounced the woman dead.

The series of shocking crimes perpetrated in this district are so distinctly outside the ordinary course of human experience that it is difficult to imagine where they will stop. Several never before committed outside the district where the murders were committed. One may search the ghastliest efforts of fiction and fail to find anything to surpass these crimes in diabolic [illegible]

...PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

Kuse [illegible] CrossGeneration Comics CrossGeneration Comics [illegible] Kuse [illegible]


The PENNY
Copiously Illustrated
LYMOP SLAYER
EIGHT DAYS
THAT'S HOW LONG SIMON'S BEEN GONE FOR REASONS MYSTERIOUS TO PARTS UNKNOWN
AND THAT'S HOW LONG I'VE BEEN MAINTAINING THE PRETENSE THAT HE'S STILL IN PARTINGTON
AS LOATH AS I AM TO ADMIT IT AFTER ALL THE MAN'S EGO IS ALREADY THE BIGGEST THING IN THE CITY THE ACTIVE PRESENCE OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE IS PERHAPS PARTINGTON'S SINGLE GREATEST CRIME DETERRENT
THE CHARADE IS WEARING ON ME BUT THE LONG REBUFFED EMBRACE OF MORPHEUS OFFERS NO REST THE MOMENT MY EYES CLOSE MY WORRIES TAKE THE FORM OF NIGHTMARES I AM BESET BY VISIONS OF THE GROTESQUE HOT PANTING BEASTS OF INDESCRIBABLE HORROR
IN MY DELIRIUM I THINK THEY ARE THE UGLIEST THINGS I HAVE EVER SEEN
I AM MISTAKEN
SAY HI, CHESTER!
HI! THAAAATABOY BI
BURP

SORRY T INTERRUPT YER NAP, M Z EMMA

S.GH-

APOLOGY ACCEPTED, SEKOWSKY IF YOU BROUGHT ME SOMETHING BESIDES THAT GIANT WRINKLE YOU CALL A DOG

DON T LISTEN TO HER, CHESTER SHE DON T MEAN T

BURF

I GOT GOOD NEWS, MAAM FIGGER N THAT S WHAT NO NEWS IS GOOD NEWS, THAT IS SAY N

I JUST WOKE UP, SEKOWSKY PLEASE TRY AGAIN

KAY ALL THE AGENTS WE

-- I --

-- YOU SENT SPY N ON THE CITY S BIG CHEESES THEY ALL AGREE THAT WHATEVER HOLD THE BARONESS HAD ON EM IS F R SURE GONE

THAT IS GOOD NEWS

THOUGH SIMON HAS NO FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES PER SE, HE DOES RELY ON CERTAIN AGENTS OF ALL WALKS TO SERVE AS HIS EYES THROUGHOUT THE CITY

SEKOWSKY IS PAID TO GATHER AND RELAY THEIR INFORMATION. IT'S A MORE APPROPRIATE JOB FOR A MAN WHOSE ODOR MAKES HIM LESS SUBTLE

SOMETH NG ELSE?

I HEAR TALK INNA STREETS, Y KNOW? RUMOR S GETT N AROUND THAT THE BOSS S OUTTA TOWN

MEANIN TH NASTY ELEMENT S ON THE R SE OUT THERE

SO I SEE

Y WANNA FEED CHESTER? HE LOVES H S PEANUTS, HE DOES.

HE L EAT RIGHT OUTTA Y R HAND.

I BELIEVE YOU.

IF YOU REMOVE THE RIGHT OUTTA FROM THAT STATEMENT

I TOLD YOU SEKOWSKY, AS I HAVE TOLD ALL THE AGENTS SIMON IS ON SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT

FROM THE GUMMINT?

ALL Right?

PARDON?

I MEAN YES, FROM THE GOVERNMENT COME ALONG, MR SEKOWSKY THERE S WORK TO BE DONE

TELL THE AGENTS I WANT THEM TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY CAN REGARD NG THIS K LLER OF PROSTITUTES WHO S MADE THE HEADL NES

I SHOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO KNOW WHAT WE CAN DO TO STOP HIM

SAY PLEASE

WHAT?

I DON T TAKE ORDERS FROM NO SKIRT

NO, YOU TAKE THEM FROM THE ASSOCIATE IN CHARGE DURING MR ARCHARD S ABSENCE IF YOU RE NOT UP TO THAT TASK, I L BE GLAD TO CABLE SIMON AND ASK FOR THE NAME OF A SU TABLE REPLACEMENT. WOULD THAT SUIT?

OKAY! OKAY! WE WAS JUST FUNNIN ! R GHT, CHESTER?

BURF

NOT THE FIRST TIME THIS WEEK I'VE HAD TO PULL RANK ON THE AGENTS, AND IT'S VERY FRUSTRATING.

ON THE ONE HAND, SIMON'S VANISHING GIVES ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO LAY DOWN SOME HIERARCHY AND ASSERT MYSELF

ON THE OTHER HAND, CLEARLY IT'S BEST THAT SIMON MAKE HIS PRESENCE FELT IN THIS CITY AGAIN

BY SOLVING THE DOLLYMOP MURDERS

AS ALWAYS, OUR CONTACTS AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS ARE HAPPY FOR OUR HELP WITHIN MINUTES I'M INTRODUCED TO THE DETECTIVE HEADING UP THE INVESTIGATION

DAVID KINGSLEY -- AT YOUR SERVICE, MISS BISHOP. WE'VE MET BEFORE, YOU KNOW. AT THE POSTLETON GALA

POSTLETON? WAS I THERE?

THINK BACK. YOU WERE WEARING A CHIFFON DRESS OF A GREEN THAT PERFECTLY MATCHED YOUR EYES

YOU -- OFFER YOU REMEMBER THAT?

I'M OBSERVANT

PARTICULARLY OF SUCH THAT INTRIGUE ME

OH, MY

AND TO THINK THIS DAY STARTED BADLY

QUITE THE FILE. I ADMIRE YOUR DILIGENCE

THIS CASE HAS ALREADY BECOME FAR TOO PUBLIC. THE DEPARTMENT NEEDS IT QUASHED BEFORE PANIC SPREADS

SO YOU'RE NOT PUTTING IN THE EXTRA HOURS TO ANGLE FOR PROMOTION?

I VERY MUCH WANT TO BE AN INSPECTOR SOMEDAY

I'VE WORKED HARD TOWARDS IT. BUT MY FIRST PRIORITY IS TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS CITY

I JUST WANT TO BE A GOOD POLICE-MAN, MISS BISHOP

GOOD ANSWER

I LIKE THAT ANSWER

FOUR STREETWALKERS DEAD, OR SHOULD I SAY THREE?

YOUR POSSER STATES THAT CASSIE SOMMERSBY WAS A PERFECTLY RESPECTABLE BANK SECRETARY. MODEST OFFICE-WORTHY ATTIRE. SHE DOESN'T FIT THE PROFILE AT ALL

ARE YOU CERTAIN THE SAME KILLER IS RESPONSIBLE?

UNFORTUNATELY. YES. WHAT WE'VE KEPT FROM THE PRESS SO AS TO WEED OUT ANY FALSE CONFESSIONS IS THE NATURE OF THE MURDER WEAPON

ALL THE PUNCTURE WOUNDS SHOW IT TO BE AN UNUSUAL KNIFE WITH AN ACUTELY CURVED BLADE

MUCH, IF NOT EXACTLY LIKE, THIS ONE

MISS SOMMERSBY WAS SLAIN BY THAT SAME BLADE. I'D STAKE MY REPUTATION ON IT. I MYSELF WAS FIRST ON THE SCENE OF HER MURDER AND SAW THE WOUNDS FRESH

FORTUNATELY, MY PRESENCE ALLOWED FOR NO TAMPERING WITH THE CORPSE AFTER THE FACT. NO MISTAKEN IDENTIFICATION OF THE WEAPON

NO, SHE'S DEFINITELY PART OF THE CHAIN

GOOD. REST HER SOUL.

AMEN. FORGIVE ME FOR PRESUMING, THEN, MR. KINGSLEY

BUT SURELY YOU SENSE AS DO I THAT HER UNIQUENESS IS THE KEY TO THIS INVESTIGATION

WITHOUT A DOUBT -- BUT I'VE TURNED UP NOTHING SO FAR. HAVE YOU A THEORY?

SIMPLY THAT SHE MUST HAVE HAD SOMETHING IN COMMON WITH THE OTHER VICTIMS. THAT'S THE ONLY RATIONAL EXPLANATION AS TO WHY SHE WAS DONE IN

WITH YOUR PERMISSION, IF I COULD RE-OPEN THAT PART OF THE INVESTIGATION?

YOU AND SIMON BOTH?

OF COURSE. MR. ARCHARD IS VERY INVOLVED IN THIS CASE. WE WORK VERY CLOSELY

HOW FORTUNATE FOR HIM

I MUST GET TO WORK, MR. KINGSLEY

MR. KINGSLEY WAS A THUG WHO RAISED A BOY FOND OF COPS AND ROBBERS. CALL ME DAVID. I'LL MEET WITH YOU TOMORROW, THEN?

ABOUT THE CASE

MOSTLY

OH

MY

The PENNY ARCADIAN

EPTING COACH LINE

SIMON ARCHARD PUT PROFESSIONAL FIGHTER PETER GRIMES TO WORK FOLLOWING SIMON'S EXPOSE OF THE PARTINGTON BOXING SYNDICATE

PETE'S TESTIMONY WAS INVALUABLE BUT IT COST HIM HIS CAREER SO SIMON TOOK IT UPON HIMSELF TO MAKE PETE NOT ONLY AN AGENT

BUT A GENTLEMAN UNFORTUNATELY FOR PETE

HARRUMPH-

HOW-DO-YOU-DO-MISS SUS-SOMMERS BY?

SIMON'S IDEA OF A GENTLEMAN

POOR PETE HE FEELS ABOUT AS COMFORTABLE IN A STARCHED COLLAR AS I WOULD DRESSED AS A WHOOPING CRANE

GOOD EVENING MR SOMMERSBY SAY HELLO PETER

HOW-DO-YOU DO MISTER SOMMERS BY?

STILL, HE PLAYS THE ROLE SIMON SET FOR HIM OUT OF COMPLETE LOYALTY

I THOUGHT TO BRING PETE ALONG IN CASE I RAN INTO ANY TROUBLE, BUT I AM INSTEAD MET WITH UTTER COURTESY BY CASSIE'S PARENTS THE FIFTH-GENERATION SOCIAL CENTER OF MUCH OF PARTINGTON'S HIGH SOCIETY

I THANK YOU FOR SEEING ME I CANNOT BEGIN TO IMAGINE THE PAIN OF YOUR LOSS A FEW WEEKS AGO MR ARCHARD SENDS HIS CONDOLENCES BUT IS INTENT ON BRINGING HER KILLER TO JUSTICE

FORGIVE MY DIRECTNESS, BUT WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT HER PERSONAL LIFE? TOO OFTEN, THESE MATTERS CAN BE TRACED TO SAY, SPURNED SUITORS

NOT THIS TIME I'M AFRAID MISS BISHOP CASSIE WAS BETWEEN GENTLEMEN CALLERS NONE OF WHOM WAS EVER WORTH A TINKERS DAMN, I MIGHT ADD BUT NONE WE HAVEN'T ALREADY INVESTIGATED OURSELVES

AND AS FOR HER GIRLFRIENDS, THERE AREN'T ANY WHO GRIEVE MUCH LESS THAN WE DO NO DOUBT CASSIE WAS VERY OUTGOING QUITE ACTIVE SOCIALLY

MR GRIMES, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE WHILE YOU SIT?

NAW, I'M

I MEAN NO THANK YOU MISS SUS SOMMERS-BY

AND WITH THAT, PETE LOOKS AT ME AND I CAN PRACTICALLY HEAR HIM BEGGING MY APPROVAL I SMILE TO TELL HIM HE'S DOING FINE

EVEN USING SIMON'S NAME THIS WASN'T AN EASY APPOINTMENT TO MAKE THE SOMMERSBYS, LEGENDARILY PRIVATE TO BEGIN WITH WERE UNDERSTANDABLY RETICTANT TO REVISIT THEIR HEARTACHE

WE CAN'T AFFORD TO RUFFLE ANY FEATHERS HERE UNTIL I LEARN EVERYTHING I

MY WORD! DOES ANYONE ELSE-

WHAT IS THAT DREADFUL SMELL?

PEET LOOKA THERE MUSTA STEPPED IN SOME HORSE PIE OUTSIDE

LEMME JUST GET THAT

EEEEEEK!

CAN

MY BEST LINEN NAPKINS!

I DUNNO BOUT BEST ANYMORE SORRY DON'T GET YER BUSTLE IN A KNOT I'LL GET RID OF T

NO! IT'S PART OF AN HEIRLOOM

FWOOMP!

SWAM

I SUPPOSE THE AROMA OF A FIREPLACE DOES CARRY THROUGH A HOUSE LIKE THAT

WHO KNEW?

WA'K YA BACK T'HEAD QUARTERS, MZ EMMA? IT'S NO TROUBLE

I'LL BE FINE PETE YOU TAKE CARE

I

CAN

THE DAWN BRINGS A RELENTLESS PARADE OF AGENTS EACH BEARING PUZZLE PIECES OF INFORMATION

NONE OF WHICH SADLY, CONNECT

I KNOW CASSIE'S EMPLOYERS MY HUSBAND AND I MORTGAGE OUR RESTAURANT FROM THAT BANK SURE ENOUGH, EVERYONE THERE SPEAKS GLOWINGLY OF HER

WHEN I SHOWED PICTURES OF THE OTHER VICTIMS, NOT ONLY WAS I ANGRILY ASSURED CASSIE WOULD NEVER CONSORT WITH SUCH TROLLOPS

I WAS INFORMED THAT MY BUSINESS WAS NO LONGER WELCOME AT THEIR BANK TELL SIMON HE OWES ME FOR THE COST OF RE FINANCING

NO ENEMIES. SUCH A BEAUTIFUL GIRL HAS NO JEALOUS BOYFRIENDS IN HER PAST ?

IT'SSSS ENTIRELY POSSSSSIBLE MY CONTACTSSSS TELL ME THAT SSSSHE WASSSSN'T EXACTLY A NICCCCE GIRL

SSSEEMS SSSHE WASSS KNOWN AROUND TOWN TO BE RATHER EASSSSSY, YOU GET MY DRIFT

YES I DO YES THANK YOU

THEY SSSAY SSSHE COULD DO THINGSSSS WITH HER

DONE. WE'RE DONE. THANK YOU I'LL CUSS SSSS

MEMO TO SIMON EMPLOY FEWER AGENTS WHO RUB THEIR HANDS TOGETHER IN GLEE

A JEALOUS LOVER, THEN? UNLIKELY AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, ALL THE MEN WE CAN CONNECT WITH CASSIE NO LONGER REMAIN IN PARTINGTON -- RULING THEM OUT AS VENGEFUL SUSPECTS

THE FACT THAT THEY'VE ALL LEFT TOWN IS LIKELY ATTRIBUTABLE TO CASSIE'S DISAPPROVING PARENTS, WHO -- GIVEN THEIR FINANCIAL STATION -- CAN CERTAINLY "INFLUENCE" THEM TO LEAVE NO WONDER THE GIRL WASN'T SEEING ANYONE

WHA' ABOUT HER POP, THEN, LOOV?

MEBBE A LIL BIT O' TH' OL' CHIM CHIM, THEN? A LIL TOO MUCH PAPPY'S GRL IF YA KNOW?

I CONSIDERED IT, BERT, BUT

NUH-UH GUY'S A DOCTAH, I GOTTA TELLYA

AN' CORD'N T THE PATIENTS WHAT MATCHED HIS WORK RECORDS, THE OL BOID'S GOT ALIBIS TIGHTER N SIMON'S WALLET, E DOES. AIN'T HIM

MAYBE IT'S A MONKEY I ONCE SEEN A FELLA TRAIN IS CHIMP T' RUN DOWN T' THE CORNER FOR A PAPER

AND A CRULLER A PAPER AN' A CRULLER

NEVER COUNT OUT DEM MONKEYS PAT'S WHAT I SAY

SO NOTED

NEXT ?

I THINK I HAVE IT. IF YOU TAKE THE HANDS OF THE CLOCK AT THE TIMES OF BIRTH OF ALL FOUR VICTIMS AND MAP THEM TO THE SEMAPHORE FLAG CODE, YOU GET A KEY WORD

WHICH IS?

BURF

GET OUT

ALL MORNING LONG EVERY CRACKPOT SIMON EVER MET SAPS ANOTHER FEW MINUTES OF MY LIFE

I'M GETTING NOWHERE, AND I'M NOT EVEN MAKING GOOD TIME

DAVID SENT WORD HE WANTED TO MEET FOR DINNER THANK GOD

WHAT'S NEEDED HERE -

IS A FRESH PAIR OF EYES.

SO THERE I WAS HANGING ON BY MY *FINGERTIPS* FROM THE *FORTNIGHT BRIDGE* NOTHING BELOW ME, *FAR* BELOW ME, BUT *RIVER*.

THE MURDERER HANGING BY *HIS FINGERTIPS* FROM MY *LEFT ANKLE* MY *ANKLE!* THE LITTLE *GIRL* FROM MY *RIGHT*.

WHEN THE KILLER CLAMPS HIS *KNIFE* IN HIS *TEETH* TO FREE BOTH *HANDS* AND STARTS TO PULL HIMSELF UP

NO!

YES. NOW HE'S AT MY SHINS NOW HE'S AT MY *KNEES* MY ARMS FEEL LIKE THEY'RE *BREAKING*, HE'S SO HEAVY

SO I START *SWINGING* MY *BODY* SWINGING *HARD*

YES?

THAT LITTLE GIRL GETTING CLOSER TO THE *BRIDGE* WITH EVERY *ARC* UNTIL, AT *LAST*, WITH MY *FINAL* BURST OF STRENGTH ...I SWING HER UP *ONTO* THE BRIDGE TO SAFETY!

AND WHAT ABOUT *YOU?*

I FELL TO MY DEATH

YOU *DID NOT*

NO, BUT IT MAKES A *MUCH* BETTER STORY THERE WAS NO MAN WITH A *KNIFE*, EITHER BY THE WAY

BUT YOU *DID* SAVE THE LIFE OF A *LITTLE GIRL?*

THAT MUCH

THEN I *THINK* I CAN FORGIVE YOU THE *EMBELLISHMENT* YOU *REALLY ARE* AN *AMAZING MAN*, DAVID KINGSLEY

AND YOU ARE A *REMARKABLE ENIGMA*, EMMA BISHOP. JUST WHAT *IS* YOUR STORY?

YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE ME IF I *TOLD* YOU

LET'S JUST LEAVE IT AT *THAT* FOR NOW. WEREN'T WE TALKING ABOUT SOMETHING *ELSE* EARLIER?

THE *CASE?*

OH *YES* THE THE *CASE*

IT'S STILL ABOUT *CASSIE*, DAVID. IF WE COULD JUST FIND THE ELEMENT *COMMON* TO THE *OTHER GIRLS*, I'M *SURE* THAT WOULD ANSWER *EVERY THING*

YOU'RE *CONVINCED* OF THIS.

WELL, *SIMON* AND I ARE

YOU ARE *CONVINCED* OF THIS.

I THINK SO. IS THAT SO AWFUL?

I HOPE NOT, BECAUSE YOU'RE CONVINCING *ME*

I'M WITH YOU ON THIS, EMMA. DO KEEP ME INFORMED AT EVERY STEP OF YOUR AND *SIMON'S* INVESTIGATION

I COULD ACTUALLY *HEAR* THE QUOTATION MARKS IN THAT SENTENCE, DAVID!

ALL RIGHT I CONFESS SIMON *IS* OFF SOMEWHERE. BUT YOU UNDERSTAND WHY I'M TRYING NOT TO HAVE THAT *ANNOUNCED*

UNDERSTOOD. BUT IF HE *WERE* HERE? WOULD HE OBJECT TO OUR COLLABORATION OR TO OUR WEEKEND?

YOU'RE A *POLICEMAN* HE WOULD HARDLY ORDER ME NOT TO WORK WITH...

WEEKEND?

WELL, THAT'S WHEN THE *ROYALE* OPENS ITS NEW *PLAY*

I *KNOW!* I *LOVE* THE THEATRE!

THEN YOU *WILL* GO *WITH* ME?

I...

I WOULD *LOVE* TO

UNLESS SIMON ?

OUR RELATIONSHIP IS PURELY *BUSINESS*

GOOD

OTHERWISE...

YOUR LIFE MIGHT BE GETTING COMPLICATED

GOOD NIGHT, EMMA

INDEED

TWO OF THE VICTIMS WERE IN THE EMPLOY OF THE MADAME LADYBIRD NELL, HERSELF ONE OF OUR MOST RESOURCEFUL AGENTS

BUT SHE HAS NO NEW FACTS TO SHARE

NO, NONE OF MY GIRLS WERE FAMILIAR WITH MISS SOMMERSBY

-HRRMPH-

PARDON ME LADIES

CERTAINLY

AND BELIEVE ME, THEY HAVE NO MOTIVATION TO LIE

-MMPH-

SORRY COMIN THROUGH

NOT WITH A KILLER STALKING THE STREETS

EXCUSE M-

ALDERMAN JONES?

NO

RIGHT

NELL, I'M GETTING DESPERATE

PERHAPS IF I COULD BE WITH YOUR GIRLS

ABSOLUTELY!

WAIT

MICHELLE! TIFFANY! TAMMY!

WE HAVE A NEW RECRUIT!

COME ALONG, SWEETIE! WE'LL FIX YA UP LOVERLY!

NO! THIS ISN'T WHAT I MEAN

OH, ISN'T SHE JUS DARLIN'? SHE'LL DO SO WELL!

WE'LL LEAVE YOU TO YOUR WORK, DEAR YOU... REMEMBER EVERYTHING WE TOLD YOU?

MARVELOUS. NOW I'M BAIT. THE KILLER COULD COME ALONG ANY TIME AND KNIFE ME DEAD

I SHOULD BE SO LUCKY

NOTHING

THEN AGAIN, I'M ONE GIRL ON ONE NIGHT. WHAT ARE THE ODDS THAT THE KILLER WILL APPROACH ME JUST BECAUSE I WANT HIM TO?

UNSURE OF MYSELF I WALK AROUND A BIT TO MAKE MYSELF A MOVING TARGET

TRYING TO REMEMBER OVER THE OLFACTORY RACKET OF LAVENDER TOILET WATER THE SCENT OF DAVID'S COLOGNE

DAVID. I CAN'T REMEMBER THE LAST TIME A MAN LOOKED AT ME AS HE HAS. LET'S JUST HOPE HE NEVER SEES ME LIKE THIS

THE ONLY THING WORSE THAN THAT WOULD BE SIMON SUDDENLY MATERIALIZING AROUND THE CORNER

AN EVENTUALITY EVOKED BY THE FEELING THAT I TRULY AM BEING WATCHED

NO EVIDENCE OF SAME, HOWEVER. NO FOOTPRINTS, EVEN. JUST THE TRASH AND DETRITUS OF A TYPICAL URBAN ALLEYWAY

TEN O'CLOCK ELEVEN TWELVE ONE

FOUR HOURS, AND NOT ONE NIBBLE

A TERM I USE STRICTLY IN THE FISHING SENSE, BY THE WAY. NOT THAT I'M PARTICULARLY EAGER TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AS SOME TOFFER

BUT I MEAN IS IT ME?

AM I DOING SOMETHING WRONG, OR

OH

PETE!

PETE, STOP!

PETE, WE TALKED ABOUT THIS! WE HAVE TO LET CUSTOMERS APPROACH, OR IT'LL LOOK SUSPICIOUS!

I KNOW, BUT WE'LL. THE WAY THESE GUYS LOOK AT YA, I'S. THEY'RE

I JUST CAN'T HELP IT. MISS EMMA

SIGH

AND HE HONESTLY CAN'T. WHEN WE SAY SOMEONE'S LOYAL TO A FAULT, THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT WE MEAN. NO, IF WE'RE TO STAND ANY CHANCE OF SNARING OUR PREDATOR

WE'LL NEED A NEW APPROACH

MOMMY ?

MOMMY ?

PUT THE BELT DOWN, MOMMY!

SOMEBODY SAY "BELT"?

FWAM

HE CONFESSED? IMMEDIATELY?

POLICE

YOU'D THINK AFTER ALL *THAT*, HE COULD PUT UP A *LITTLE* FIGHT. THIS IS THE MOST ANTICLIMACTIC CASE I'VE EVER *SEEN*

WELL, I'M *SORRY* THIS ADVENTURE ISN'T UP TO MR. ARCHARD'S ORDINARILY *SCINTILLATING STANDARDS*, MISS BISHOP, BUT NOT *EVERY* MURDERER IS A *BRILLIANT MASTERMIND*

IN FACT, *DESPITE* THE FACT THAT IN HIS DEMENTIA HE'S TAKING CREDIT FOR CRIMES COMMITTED BEFORE HE WAS EVEN *BORN*, MR. *DANIEL WHITSON* IS ANYTHING *BUT* A CRIMINAL GENIUS

I *KNOW* THIS BECAUSE WE'VE LOCKED HIM UP OVERNIGHT MORE THAN *ONCE* ON DRUNK AND *DISORDERLY* CHARGES

UNTIL *TONIGHT*, HOWEVER. WE ASSUMED HIS PSYCHOTIC RAVINGS CAME FROM A *BOTTLE*

OLD STORY. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS A BOY, etc., etc. HERE'S HIS *FILE*. JOB HISTORY, ARREST AND MEDICAL REPORTS

IF YOU CAN CONSTRUCT A *PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE* FOR THE SAKES OF *HIM*, WE'LL START MEASURING *YOU* FOR A CASKET

IT WOULDN'T TAKE MUCH

DESPITE THE INSPECTOR'S SNIDE CRACK, WHITSON IS TEXTBOOK. EVERYTHING HERE POINTS TO SOMEONE WHO'D

OH MY GOD

IN THE NEXT HALF-HOUR, MY THOUGHTS ARE LED DOWN AN ENTIRELY *NEW* AND VERY *DARK* AVENUE WHERE IS

DETECTIVE KINGSLEY! WHERE *IS* HE? I HAVE TO *SPEAK* TO HIM *IMMEDIATELY!*

NOT HIS *SHIFT*, EM

TRY CALLING HIS *HOUSE*

OPERATOR, PUT YOU RIGHT *THROUGH* IF HE'S *THERE*

SURE ENOUGH, HE ANSWERS ON THE THIRD RING

HELLO, *DAVID?*

THANK GOD I FOUND YOU, DAVID. I NEED YOU TO MEET ME AT THE ARCHARD *HEADQUARTERS*. YES *RIGHT AWAY*

NO. WAIT. GIVE ME AN *HOUR*. BUT DAVID, I'VE FOUND SOMETHING THAT SHEDS A WHOLE NEW *LIGHT* ON CASSIE'S *MURDER*

DAVID, I'VE BROKEN THE *CASE*

FINE. I'LL SEE YOU *THERE*

RIGHT AFTER I HAVE ANOTHER CHAT WITH THE SOMMERSBYS

EMMA S EVERYTHING ALL R GHT? YOU MADE IT SOUND SO *URGENT*

WHAT DID YOU *FIND?*

THAT I VE BEEN WRONG ALL *ALONG* ABOUT CASSIE THERE *WAS* NO COMMON ELEMENT LINKING HER TO THE OTHERS, DAVID

BECAUSE *WHITSON* DIDN T *KILL HER*

WHAT? DID HE *SAY* THAT?

HE DIDN T *HAVE* TO I *READ* IT IN A *POLICE REPORT*

THE NIGHT CASS E WAS *KILLED*, DAVID WH TSON WAS IN THE *DRUNK TANK*

DANIEL WHITSON WAS A *MADMAN* WHO KILLED *RANDOM PROSTITUTES*. SOME- ONE C EVERLY *SANE TARGETED* OUR *CASSIE*

ALL RIGHT. ALL RIGHT. THEN WE START FROM *SCRATCH*. WHO HAS *MOTIVE*? A *CO WORKER*? AN ANGRY *PARENT*? LET S GO SPEAK WITH HER *FAMILY* AGA N

ALREADY *DONE*

I REMEMBERED HOW *DISMISSIVE* THEY WERE OF HER *EX-BOYFRIENDS* AND ASKED MYSE F. SUPPOSE THERE WERE MORE *TO* THAT? OUR *SECOND* CONVERSATION FORCED MUCH OF *THIS* OUT N THE OPEN

CASSIE WASN T SIMPLY *PROMISCUOUS*, DAVID

YOU RE *JOKING*

SHE WAS N FACT, A *NYMPHOMANIAC* A *SEX ADDICT*

AND A RATHER *RAUNCHY* ONE AT *THAT*-- SOMETH NG HER UPPER-CRUST PARENTS WORKED *HARD* TO KEEP *SECRET*

NO. THE PATTERN WAS ALWAYS THE *SAME*. CASSIE RESENTFUL OF HER PARENTS *CONTROLLING NATURE*, WOULD DRAW A LOVER NTO A *SECRET AFFAIR* UNTIL HE *BORED* HER

--THEN *END* THE REL AT ONS HIP AND CONFESS THE D RTY DETAILS TO HER *FATHER* JUST TO *SPITE* HIM

I DON T TH NK SOMMERSBY FORCED HER EX LOVERS OUT OF *PARTINGTON* BECAUSE HE *DISAPPROVED* OF THEM HE DID T SO THEY COULDN T *SPREAD* CASS E S DISGRACEFUL SECRET HIS ENTIRE *SOCIAL STATION* HINGED ON THEIR *SILENCE*

BUT NOT *EVERY* MAN CAN BE BULLED INTO LEAV NG *BEHIND* EVERYTHING HE *KNOWS*, NOT EVEN BY A *SOMMERSBY*. SOME HAVE *CAREERS*--LOCAL *TIES*. I D GUESS WE RE LOOK NG FOR THE ONE WHO HAD STRONG REASONS TO *STAY*

THE ONE WHO, TOO LATE, SAW WHAT WAS *COMING* - AND *KILLED* CASSIE *BEFORE* SHE COULD REVEAL H M AND DESTROY HIS *LIFE*

ONE WHO GOOD *LORD!* TOOK INSPIRATION FROM THE *DOLLYMOP KILLINGS* AND TR ED TO FOLD CASSIE *INTO* THEM AS A *COVER-UP!*

EMMA, WE HAVE TO TEL THE DEPARTMENT *IMMEDIATELY!* THIS MEANS THERE S A *COPYCAT KILLER* ST LL ON THE *LOOSE!*

BUT THAT S JUST *IT*

HE S *NOT*

HE S BEEN *CAUGHT*

IT *HAD* TO BE ONE OF THE FEW OFFICERS WHO KNEW ABOUT THE *SPECIAL BLADE* WH TSON USED. BUT *ALL* OF T HEM HAVE *ALIBIS* FOR THAT NIGHT. IF YOU LL *RECALL*, YOU *YOURSELF* TO D ME WHERE *YOU* WERE

YOU WERE *THE FIRST ON THE SCENE OF THE MURDER*

DAVID

YOU'RE THE *KILLER*

VERY *CLEVER*, DAVID

SIDL NG UP TO ME WASN T *FLIRTATIOUS*. INQUIRING AS TO S MON S WHERE ABOUTS WASN T ABOUT *ROMANCE*

YOU HAD TO KEEP *BOTH* OF U S IN SIGHT ONCE I ELECTED TO INVESTIGATE *CASSIE*

R GHT PETE?

?

HOW-DO-YOU-DO-MIS TER-*KINGS* LEY?

DON T *WASTE* IT, PETE I DON T TH NK HE CAN *HEAR* YOU.

I VE ALREADY CALLED *AHEAD* TO *COMMISSIONER THORNTON*

IF YOU D TAKE THIS MAN TO *POLICE HEADQUARTERS*, THEY LL BE *EXPECTING* HIM

AND *THANK* YOU

ANY *TIME* YOU LL BE *OKAY?*

NATURALLY

AFTER A L, I HAD *TWO* MEN BACK NG ME. YOU CAN *COME OUT NOW, SIMON*

I WAS *ABOUT* TO

Oh, GIVE ME SOME *CREDIT*. I M NOT *STUPID*

OF COURSE I WAS UNDER OBSERVATION. YOU HAD *SEKOWSKY* AND THAT *DOG LIKE* THING TRAILING ME

OR WOULD I *ORDINARILY* FIND FRESH PEANUT SHELLS IN AN ALLEYWAY?

WAS TH S A *TEST*? HOW D D I *DO*?

AS WEL AS COULD BE EXPECTED, I SUPPOSE

WAIT. DON T *SPEAK*. FOR A MOMENT I W SH TO BASK IN THE *WARM GLOW* OF YOUR *PRAISE*

THE LAST I SAW OF *YOU*, YOU WERE CHARGING INTO A *FLAMING BUILDING* N *SEARCH* OF SOME TH NG WHAT COULD *POSSIBLY* BE THAT *IMPORTANT*?

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS CONTAINING POTENTIAL LY VITAL *INFORMATION*

SLAYER STRIKES AGAIN

SOLVED

UNSOLVED

ABOUT *MIRANDA*?

NO

DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING YOU D LIKE TO *ADD* TO THAT?

YES. WHEN YOU S T AT MY DESK AND DR NK *WINE*, USE A *COASTER*

HOW DID YOU...?
SEKOWSKY WATCHED YOU ON THE *STREET* I WATCHED YOU FROM *HERE*
THERE'S A *PASSAGEWAY* HIDDEN BEHIND THE *PAINTING*
YOU *REALIZE*, OF COURSE, THAT AS AN *ACTIVITY*, *VOYEURISM* FALLS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN *DEPLORABLE* AND *DESPICABLE*
SO DOES MAKING *PETER* WEAR A *DRESS* YOU DEMONSTRATED ADEQUATE SKILLS IN MY ABSENCE THAT'S WHAT'S IMPORTANT
SO *YOU* SAY I DON'T LIKE THIS *ONE BIT*, SIMON ARCHARD! WHAT *ELSE* ARE YOU KEEPING FROM ME?
AS MY ASSISTANT YOU KNOW WHAT YOU *NEED* TO KNOW
AS YOUR *PARTNER* [illegible] TO KNOW *MORE*
PARTNER WORLD

The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa
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Butch GUICE PENCILER
Michael PERKINS INKER
Laura DePUY with Chris Garcia COLORISTS
Dave LANPHEAR LETTERER

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The PENNY ARCADIAN

Copiously Illustrated — Afternoon Edition, Price One Penny

DOLLYMOP SLAYER NABBED

OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

THE CITY'S FAVORITE SON, HIS MIND IS RAZOR-SHARP

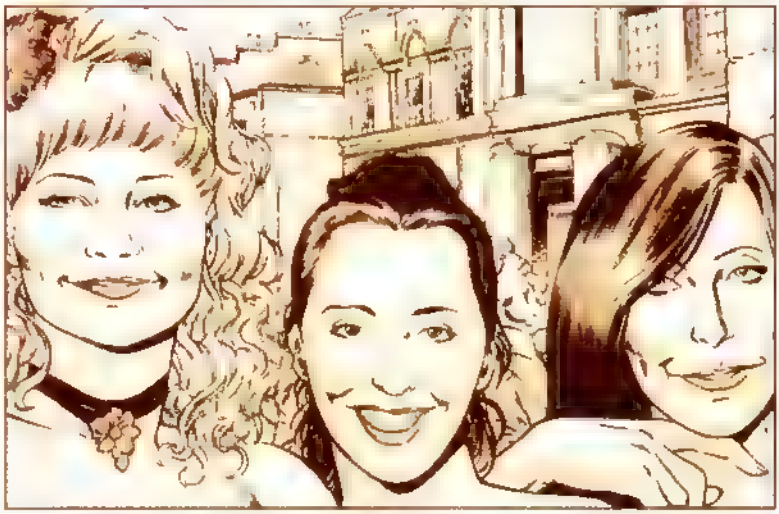
EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY, HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

CORRADINO

PRESTIDIGITATEUR EXTRAORDINAIRE

EVENING'S LADIES AVAILED OF FEAR



PARTINGTON'S LADIES SPARED HEINOUS FATE

On Saturday last, adding to his unbroken string of triumphs, the inestimable sleuth Simon Archard brought to justice the wretch known to our ladies of the evening as the 'Dollymop Slayer'

For many weeks, one Daniel Whitson of 889 Farque Court, City, had perpetrated a thrill of horror throughout Partington at large, taking muscle and blade to lo prostitutes chosen apparently at random. Only through the keen deductions of Partington's favorite son Archard was Whitson at last apprehended, bringing relief to womenfolk throughout the town limits. Bait for Archard's trap came in the form of Ella Bishop, Archard's assistant and chief confidate, who enacted the detective's keen plan under his direction

At a quarter to 4 o'clock Police-constable Wharton, 97J, when in Dock's-row, Strunkfield, had come upon the body of a woman lying on a part of the footway, and on stooping to raise her up in the belief that she was drunk he discovered that her " was cut almost from ear dead but stil roousted from at the place nounced the

nes perpe- 'y outside perience nor ex- re the may ct.on surpass these

G.-

As you can see, I arranged for you to be awarded full credit for solving this case in order not to alert the criminal element to your absence. This will remain our secret.

Unless the Arcadian continues to refer to me as "Ella."

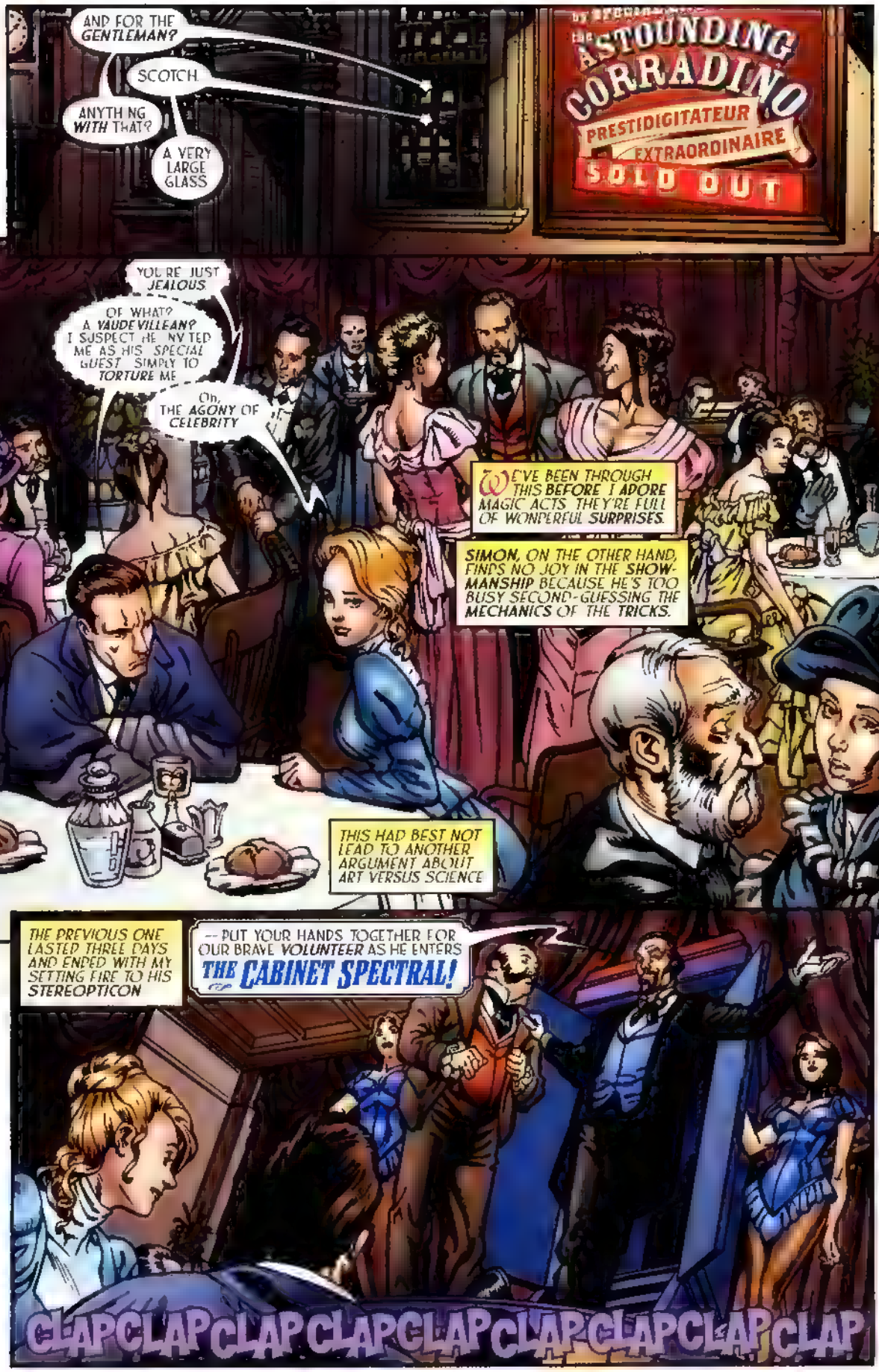
-E.

tical audacity

PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

Rose™ ... Crossgen® Crossgen Comics Crossgeneration Crossgeneration Comics the Crossgen stgl ... Rose™ ... PRINTED IN CANADA


AND FOR THE GENTLEMAN?
SCOTCH.
ANYTHING WITH THAT?
A VERY LARGE GLASS
THE ASTOUNDING CORRADINO
PRESTIDIGITATEUR EXTRAORDINAIRE
SOLD OUT
YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS.
OF WHAT? A VAUDEVILLEAN? I SUSPECT HE INVITED ME AS HIS SPECIAL GUEST SIMPLY TO TORTURE ME.
Oh, THE AGONY OF CELEBRITY
WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS BEFORE. I ADORE MAGIC ACTS. THEY'RE FULL OF WONDERFUL SURPRISES.
SIMON, ON THE OTHER HAND, FINDS NO JOY IN THE SHOWMANSHIP BECAUSE HE'S TOO BUSY SECOND-GUESSING THE MECHANICS OF THE TRICKS.
THIS HAD BEST NOT LEAD TO ANOTHER ARGUMENT ABOUT ART VERSUS SCIENCE
THE PREVIOUS ONE LASTED THREE DAYS AND ENDED WITH MY SETTING FIRE TO HIS STEREOPTICON
-- PUT YOUR HANDS TOGETHER FOR OUR BRAVE VOLUNTEER AS HE ENTERS THE CABINET SPECTRAL!
CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

FEAR **NOT** YOUR *TRAPPINGS*, KIND SIR! YOU SHAN'T FEEL A *THING!*

OF COURSE THEY SAY THE SAME OF THE GUILLOTINE

HAHAHAHAHA

AND WITH THE MAGIC WORDS

NOW YOU *SEE* HIM --

-NOW YOU *DON'T!* HE'S **GONE!**

GRACIOUS! I *DO* HOPE HE SETTLED HIS [redacted] FIRST!

HAHAHAHAHA

THE CABINET COLLAPSES INTO THE *PLATFORM*, WHICH CONCEALS A *TRAP DOOR* CAN NO ONE *SEE* THAT?

NOT *EVERYONE'S LOOKING FOR IT*, IF YOU *PLEASE! SOME* OF US WISH TO BE *ENTERTAINED*, NOT *EDUCATED*, SO *DO* KEEP YOUR VOICE *DOWN!*

AND NOW LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE CLIMAX OF TONIGHT'S PERFORMANCE!

YES, I *KNOW* WHAT YOU'RE THINKING! MANY A PERFORMER *BEFORE* CORRADINO HAS FACED *the* **HYDROCOFFIN!** A *FEW* OF THEM ACTUALLY

HAVE EVEN **SURVIVED!**

BUT TONIGHT YOU WILL STAND **WITNESS** TO THE FACT THAT ONLY **CORRADINO** THE **MAGNIFICENT**

--CAN ESCAPE FROM ITS GRIP OF **DEATH** WHILE **BLINDFOLDED!**

THREE KNOCKS YOU'LL HEAR DEAR LADIES! ON THE *THIRD*, PULL THE *SCREEN* AND REVEAL AN **EMPTY TANK** TO AN AWESTRUCK AUDIENCE!

NOW -- **SEAL THE COFFIN!**

THUMP

ONE!

THUMP

TWO!

THUMP

THREE!

AS USUAL, SIMON MOVES CONTRARY TO PUBLIC OPINION.

BUT IT MEANS WE'RE UPON THE **CRIME SCENE** BEFORE THE **SCREAMING** DIES DOWN AND BEFORE THE CROWD CAN EVEN **ARTICULATE** THE NOTION OF HAVING WITNESSED A **MURDER**

SIMON'S GATHERING CLUES

EMMA, GET ME THE VICTIM'S *TOPCOAT!*

BUT THE *MURDERER --*

GET THE COAT!

UHNNNHHHH

THE *MURDERER* IS STILL ON THE *LOOSE*, SIMON!

THE *MAGICIAN!* DID YOU *SEE* HIM?

THUNDERED RIGHT *PAST* ME HE DID, BOWLED ME AWFUL *HARD* IN MNOGGIN !

GONE YOU'RE THE *STAGE MANAGER?*

HOW DID YOU ?

THE COLLECTION OF *KEYS* YOU SAW YOUR ASSAILANT *CLEARLY?*

YES SIR IT WAS DEFINITELY

-- *CORRADINO?* YOU MEAN HE DROWNED AN *INNOCENT STRANGER* CHOSEN AT *RANDOM?*

IMAGINE ONLY *TEN WORDS* IN THAT SENTENCE, AND YET *THREE* OF THEM ARE *WRONG*

THE *VICTIM* -- HARDLY *INNOCENT* IS A DETECTIVE WITH THE *BEETON AGENCY* IT ISN'T COMMON *KNOWLEDGE*, BUT THEY WEAR SPECIAL *SIGNET RINGS* SO AS TO QUIETLY *IDENTIFY* THEMSELVES TO ONE ANOTHER

WORKING THIS FAR OUT OF *TOWN*, HE MUST HAVE BEEN *TRAILING* SOMEONE -- LIKELY CORRADINO *HIMSELF*, JUDGING BY THE *CIRCUMSTANCES* WHICH MEANS HE WAS *HARDLY* CHOSEN AT *RANDOM* KILLING HIM PUT AN *END* TO HIS *INVESTIGATION*

THE CONTUSION BEHIND HIS *EAR* INDICATES THE MAN WAS BUDGEONED *UNCONSCIOUS* BEFORE BEING *DROWNED*, BUT HE'S BEEN *STRIPPED* OF ANY FURTHER *IDENTIFICATION* WHAT'S IN HIS *COAT?*

NOT *MUCH* A HOTEL *KEY*, A POUCH OF *TOBACCO*, AND SOME *CIGARETTE PAPERS*

CIGARETTES.

SIMON? *SIMON!*

HMM? OH YES

EMMA, PHONE THAT HOTEL *IMMEDIATELY*

AND ?

AND ASK IF WE'VE TIME TO STOP CORRADINO'S *SECOND* MURDER

BROUGHT HIM TO THE *HOSPITAL* SOON AS WE *COULD*, MR. ARCHARD.

HE'LL BE *UNCONSCIOUS* FOR A WHILE, BUT HE'LL *LIVE*

WE FOUND HIM IN HIS ROOM. THE *POISON* CAME IN A MEAL DELIVERED BY *KITCHEN SERVICE*. HAD YOU NOT WARNED US IN *TIME*, HE'D MOST CERTAINLY BE *DEAD* BY NOW.

THANK YOU, DOCTOR. WE'LL *CALL* FOR YOU IF HE *AWAKENS*

SIMON, HOW DID YOU *KNOW*?

THE *FIRST* VICTIM'S FINGERS SHOWED NO *NICOTINE STAINS*. YET HE'D PURCHASED TOBACCO AND CIGARETTE PAPERS FOR *SOMEONE*, PRESUMABLY A *TRAVELING COMPANION*. AND THE *BEETON* OPERATIVES TRAVEL IN *PAIRS*.

GIVEN THAT FAR MORE *MEN* THAN *WOMEN* ENGAGE IN THE NASTY HABIT OF ROLLING *CIGARETTES*, ODDS WERE THAT COMPANION WAS HIS *INVESTIGATIVE PARTNER*—AND THUS ANOTHER *TARGET*.

SINCE CORRADINO COULDN'T COMMIT *BOTH* MURDERS ON *STAGE*, HE ARRANGED FOR THE *POISON*. NO DOUBT ONE OF *MANY* CONTINGENCIES.

THEN STOLE THE FIRST VICTIM'S *IDENTIFICATION*. HOPING TO *STALL* ME.

GIVING THIS MAN TIME TO *DIE*

William Corradine
a.k.a. "The Astounding Corradine"

touring dates

dates

same.

BUT HOW COULD CORRADINO *POSSIBLY* SURMISE ONLY *ONE* OF THEM WOULD COME TO HIS *SHOW*?

BY DELIBERATELY SPLITTING THEM *UP*.

CORRADINO—A GUEST AT THE *SAME HOTEL*—GIFTED ALL THE ROOMS WITH *VIP TICKETS*.

..BUT THROUGH AN *OVERSIGHT* THESE GENTLEMEN RECEIVED *ONE*, NOT *TWO*.

ACCORDING TO THESE *PAPERS*—WHICH CORRADINO *ALSO* WOULD HAVE STOLEN HAD WE GIVEN HIM *TIME*—A STRING OF HIGH PROFILE *ROBBERIES* COINCIDES WITH HIS *TRAVELS*. THAT'S WHY THE *BEETON MEN* WERE *TRAILING* HIM—AND HE *KNEW* THAT.

BUT IF CORRADINO WERE *EVADING THE LAW*

SIMON, WE *ALSO* RECEIVED VIP TICKETS. WHAT *CONCEIVABLE REASON* WOULD CORRADINO HAVE TO INVITE THE WORLD'S *FOREMOST DETECTIVE* TO THE *SCENE* OF HIS *CRIME*?

TO *TAUNT* ME. ALL OF THIS *CONFIRMS* WHAT I'D ALREADY *SUSPECTED*. I AND, APPARENTLY, *MIRANDA CROSS*, WHO GATHERED *NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS* ON OUR MAGICIAN.

CORRADINO IS BUT AN *ALIAS* THE MAN MAINTAINS.

HIS TRUE NAME IS *LIGHTBOURNE*

ENTER, STAGE LEFT
THE NIGHT IS FULL OF SURPRISES
MEANING?
WELL I SEE YOU DON'T WEAR ANGER VERY COMFORTABLY
NOR YOU THE ROLE OF PSYCHOANALYST THE DEDUCTIVE MIND HAS NO USE FOR ANGER THEREFORE, I AM NOT ANGRY
YOU'RE SOMETHING
YOU WERE CORRECT ABOUT THE STAGING
NO DOUBT THE FIRST MAN RECEIVED A WHISPERED WARNING TO PLAY ALONG AND STAY PUT UNTIL AFTER THE SHOW
THEN WAS SECRETLY LOWERED THROUGH WHAT'S KNOWN AS A CAULDRON TRAP
I'D FORGOTTEN YOU HAVE SOME THEATER BACKGROUND
DO YOU MISS PERFORMING?
WHY? ARE YOU TRYING TO GET RID OF ME?
I'M NOT THE MAGICIAN HERE
I SUPPOSE I MISS VENUES LIKE THIS SUPERB ACOUSTICS, GAS FOOTLIGHTS SOMETIMES
SOMETIMES YOU AND I BOTH ALLOW THE PAST TO ENCROACH A BIT
SIMON, PLEASE TELL ME MORE ABOUT THIS "LIGHTBOURNE" CHARACTER
HE WAS YOUR FORMER PARTNER THAT I KNOW BUT NOT MUCH MORE YOU NEVER SPEAK OF HIM
THEN YOU'RE USED TO IT GOOD
SIMON I'M SERIOUS UP UNTIL YOU MENTIONED HIS NAME, I'D BELIEVED HIM DEAD
AS MAD I
AND YET YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY SURE IT'S HIM?
ALMOST YES, LIKE CORRADINO, LIGHTBOURNE WAS A DEVOTEE OF STAGE MAGIC BUT UNLIKE TRAPS AND GADGETS WAS HIS HOBBY BUT THAT HARDLY MAKES FOR CONCLUSIVE IDENTIFICATION NO
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO GET IRREFUTABLE PROOF
AND THAT'S TO DUPLICATE HIS FINALE
SIMON HAVE YOU LOST YOUR
HELP ME OR GO AWAY I'M NOT INTERESTED IN BANTERING
FINE BUT TELL ME HOW THIS HELPS YOU
LIGHTBOURNE INVENTED AND SHARED WITH ME CERTAIN ESCAPE MECHANISMS FALSE HINGES, TRICK LOCKS AND THE LIKE
IF I RECOGNIZE THEM AS STEPS IN THE ESCAPE PROCEDURE THEY'RE PRACTICALLY THE SIGNATURE TO HIS CONFESSION
AND THE BLINDFOLD?
DOES IT SECRETLY CONTAIN ANYTHING THAT WOULD HELP?
NO
THEN THERE, I DRAW THE LINE ONE OF US HAS TO BE SANE

IT OCCURS TO ME THERE ARE LESS *FLAMBOYANT* WAYS TO EXAMINE THIS DEVICE

EMMA, DO *NOT*--

SIGH

MISS *BISHOP*, DO NOT *ARGUE* WITH ME

CLOSE THE *LID*

IF YOU SHOW EVIDENCE OF BEING IN *ANY* TROUBLE WHATSOEVER, I *WILL* BASH THROUGH THE GLASS WITH THAT *AXE*

YOU WON'T NEED IT

HE'S PROBABLY *RIGHT* I'VE LITTLE DOUBT HE CAN DO THIS THAT'S NOT WHAT'S *WORRYING* ME

MY *CONCERN* IS THAT SIMON IS ACTING WITH *UNCHARACTERISTIC EMOTION*--

YOU THERE--GET *AWAY* FROM THAT!

THERE'S BEEN A MAN *MURDERED* HERE AND--

--OH! IT'S *YOU*! BEGGING Y'R *PARDON*, MIZ BISHOP SO, C'N YER BOSS *EXPLAIN ANY* O THESE *GOINGS-ON* TO A LOWLY *STAGE MANAGER* ?

WOULD *THAT* KIND SIR

MR ARCHARD HAS HIS *LEADS*, BUT HE'S CHOSEN A RATHER *UNCHARACTERISTIC* MANNER IN WHICH TO *PURSUE* THEM

Y'MEAN HE DUNKED HISSELF IN THERE ON *PURPOSE*?

WORSE WITH A SORT OF *EAGERNESS*

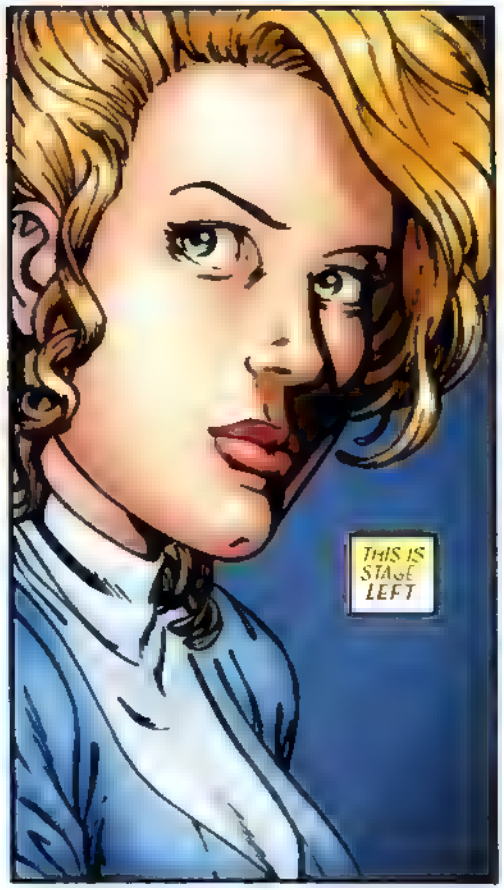
THERE WAS ALMOST A--I WANT TO SAY *COMPETITIVE* SENSE TO IT, BUT THAT'S *NOT* THE SIMON I--

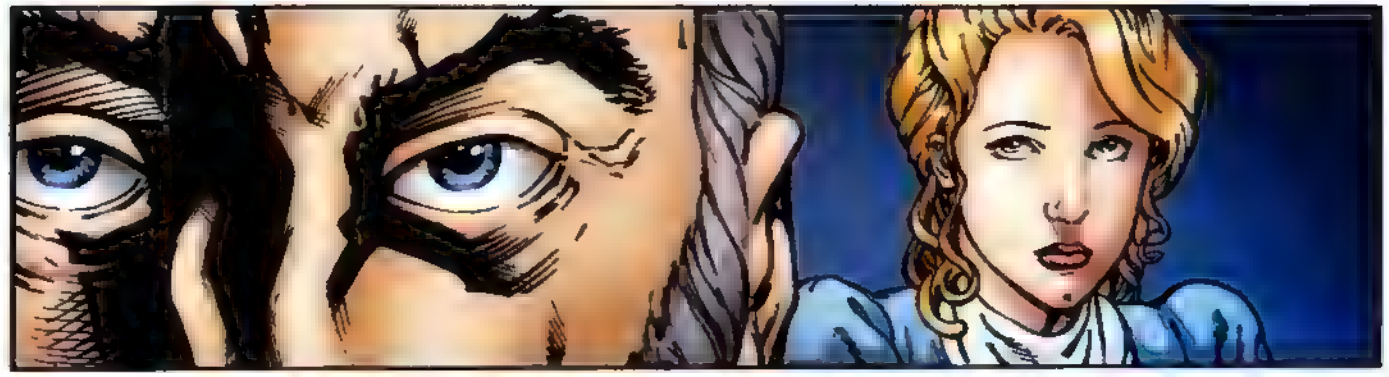
NEVER MIND I'VE ALREADY SAID TOO MUCH

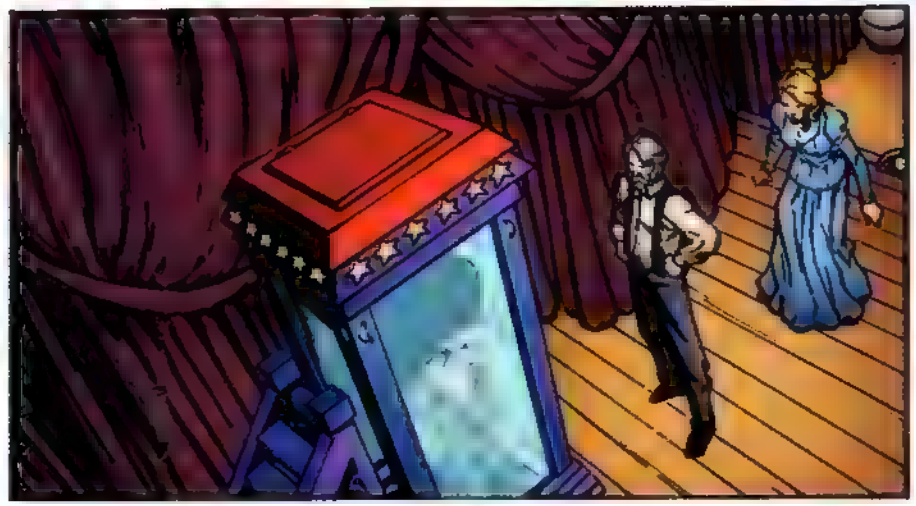
WHATEVER'S RATTLIN THROUGH IS SKULL, IT'S BEYOND YOU N *I*, *THAT'S* FER SURE IT'S *HIS SHOW*

REGULAR FOLKS LIKE *US*, ALL WE C'N DO IS JUST STAND HERE *STAGE RIGHT* N WATCH 'IM *WORK*

THAT *IS* SOMETIMES THE *CASE* THOUGH I CONFESS I'M BEGINNING TO FEEL IT HAPPENING *MORE* AND *M*


THIS IS STAGE LEFT





IT'S OVER HERE

LIGHTBOURNE
SPEAKING

AND THE REAL STAGE MANAGER?

HIM? LAST I SAW OF HIM, HE WAS OVERWROUGHT ABOUT THE MURDER

THE POOR MAN SIMPLY WENT TO PIECES

NOW I SEE SIMONS FOUND THE *LOCKPICK* SECRETED ON THE UNDER-SIDE OF A CHAIN LINK

EXCELLENT

HE KNOWS THE *SEAMS* ON THE *STRAITJACKET*, IRON STRONG DURING ANY *EXAMINATION*, *DISSOLVE* IN WATER

THAT *ALONE* IS *QUITE* THE LIFESAVER. BY THE WAY I'M QUITE *PROUD* OF THAT ONE

"LOOK AT HIM GO. DOES HE REMEMBER ?

AH, *GOOD*. THAT WHEN HELD AT *PRECISELY* THE PROPER ANGLE. NO MORE, NO *LESS*. THE *RETAINING TUMBLERS* ON THE *PADLOCK* ARE ENGINEERED TO *GIVE* WITH THE SLIGHTEST *COAXING*

-IH

BRAVO, SIMON!

NOW THE *FINAL* GIMMICK SIMON RECALLS THIS ONE, *TOO*. THE *LID* CONTAINS A HIDDEN DOOR THAT CAN PROVIDE *EGRESS*.

WHEN IT'S NOT WELDED *SHUT*

YOU... YOU'RE *INSANE!*

NO BUT I *AM* PETTY

TH THEY'LL CATCH YOU! *SOMEONE* WILL

PROBABLY IF I'M WEARING *BLOOD-SPATTERED CLOTHES*, SO *THAT* WON'T DO

STILL I'M *IMAGINATIVE*

LOCKED

YOU REALLY HAVE *NO CLUE* WHY I'M AFTER SIMON, DO YOU?

HOW TRAGIC WHEN IT COMES TO CHOOSING *PARTNERS*, MR. ARCHARD'S STANDARDS HAVE OBVIOUSLY *SLIPPED* IN MY ABSENCE

DON'T GET ME *WRONG*. I WATCHED YOU DURING SIMON'S RECENT *ABSENCE*

YOU DIDN'T SEEM *COMPLETELY* INCOMPETENT NOT FROM WHERE I STOOD

WHICH BY THE WAY WAS INSIDE THE *SECRET PASSAGES* WITHIN OUR--I'M SORRY, *SIMON'S* HEAD-QUARTERS

SIMON HE NEEDS *AIR* -!

AH, YES. HE'S UNABLE TO *BREATHE*

WHAT A *HORRIBLE* WAY TO *DIE*

AND HE'S FINALLY MADE HIS *MISTAKE*. HE SAYS HE KNOWS ME NOW - YET HE EXPECTS ME TO *COWER AND SCREAM?*

LATER

>HNNNH!<

NOW

OH!

IF ONLY THIS DAMNABLE *SKIRT* WOULDN'T TRIP ME UP -!

THE AXE. IF I CAN JUST GET TO THE--

EVEN AGAIN, PERHAPS *BLOODY CLOTHES* AREN'T MY BIGGEST *PROBLEM* RIGHT NOW

ALWAYS GO WITH YOUR *FIRST INSTINCT*, SIMON USED TO SAY

NOT YET. NOT YET

NOW!

GAS *FOOTLIGHTS*

GAS FLAME!

FWOOSH

AAH!

AAAAAH!

AS I'D HOPED, HIS DISGUISE CATCHES FIRE, BUT AS CURIOUS AS I AM ABOUT THE FACE UNDERNEATH --

--LET HIM BURN.

I HAVE OTHER PRIORITIES

KSSSSH

AND THUS I HEAR THE SOUND OF LIGHTBOURNE'S FLEEING FOOTSTEPS

→KOFF! KOFF!←

--UNDER THE NOISE OF GEYSERING WATER

SIMON, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? HURRY UP AND GET YOUR BREATH BACK SO YOU CAN COUGH OUT A WORD OR TWO OF GRATITUDE

YOU BRO→KOFF←E BROKE THE GLASS

Oh PLEASE! YOU'L SPOIL ME WITH THAT KIND OF TALK AND

OH!

HOW DARE YOU?

I HAD IT UNDER CONTROL! I DIDN'T REQUIRE YOUR ASSISTANCE! I COULD HAVE ESCAPED! I COULD HAVE --

SIMON, I... I'M SORRY! I HAD NO INTENTION OF UNDERMINING YOU! I MERELY BELIEVED YOU WERE IN DANGER!

SIMON, PLEASE SAY SOMETHING

SETTLE DOWN, EMMA

YOU'VE DONE NOTHING TO APOLOGIZE FOR

NOW, WHAT PRECISELY HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO THESE LAST SIX MINUTES...?

AND WHILE I FREED YOU, LIGHTBOURNE ESCAPED
SIMON, THOSE CLIPPINGS YOU WERE SO DESPERATE TO SALVAGE FROM MIRANDA CROSS MANSION DID THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH
PRESTIDIGITATEUR EXTRAORDINAIRE
SOLD OUT
MY EX-PARTNER? PERHAPS WE CAN DISCUSS THAT LATER. YOU SAY YOU LIBERATED A BANDANA ?
YOU MEAN THIS? I SUPPOSE I GRABBED IT FROM HIM WITHOUT TRULY THINKING ABOUT IT. IS IT SIGNIFICANT?
YES
AND YOU'LL TELL ME WHY WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE IT?
YES
WELL, SPLENDID. THAT'S THE SIMON I KNOW
NOT THE SIMON WHO SO UNCHARACTERISTICALLY EXPLODED MOMENTS AGO. I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM LIKE THAT EVER
WHAT IS IT ABOUT THIS OLD ALLY OF SIMON'S THAT CAN BRING OUT SUCH BEHAVIOR?
WHAT IS THE MYSTERY OF LIGHTBOURNE?
THE ASTOUNDING CORRADINO
PRESTIDIGITATEUR EXTRAORDINAIRE
SOLD OUT

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CURTAINS FOR DETECTIVE

OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

THE CITY'S FAVORITE SON, HIS MIND IS RAZOR-SHARP

EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY, HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE

A CUNNING CRIMESMITH WITH COUNTENANCE UNREVEALED

MURDERED ON STAGE BEFORE HORRIFIED AUDIENCE

VICTIM PREY TO PRESTIDIGITATION FOUL

CASE SOLVED, SUSPECT AFOOT

To conclude his performance this evening past in a most spectacular and grisly style, visiting stage magician "The Amazing Corradino" unveiled before his shocked audience a human corpse.

According to eye-witnesses, Corradino invited audience member Detective William Wilson to participate in his act, vanishing him within a [illegible] wooden cabinet before the eyes of all present. Moments later, Corradino himself undertook a water tank escape known as the "Hydrocoffin," but when the trick was revealed, those present were shocked to see Wilson's corpse floating inside, with Corradino nowhere to be found.

Partington's favorite son, Detective Simon Archard, on the scene and on the trail, located and confronted Corradino within hours but could not effect his capture. Since then, [illegible] provided the *Penny Arcadian* suggests that "Corradino" may well be an alias for the brilliant and noted Malcolm Lightbourne, Archard's former partner, believed deceased. Archard himself declined comment on this speculation, however. If Lightbourne has, indeed, returned in some uncanny fashion and has enjoined Archard in adversity, the [illegible] such a story closely [illegible] bode ill for the stalwart citizens of

•••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

Ruse™ Jo[illegible] Issue 7 MAY 2002 FIRST PRINT NG Pub[illegible]
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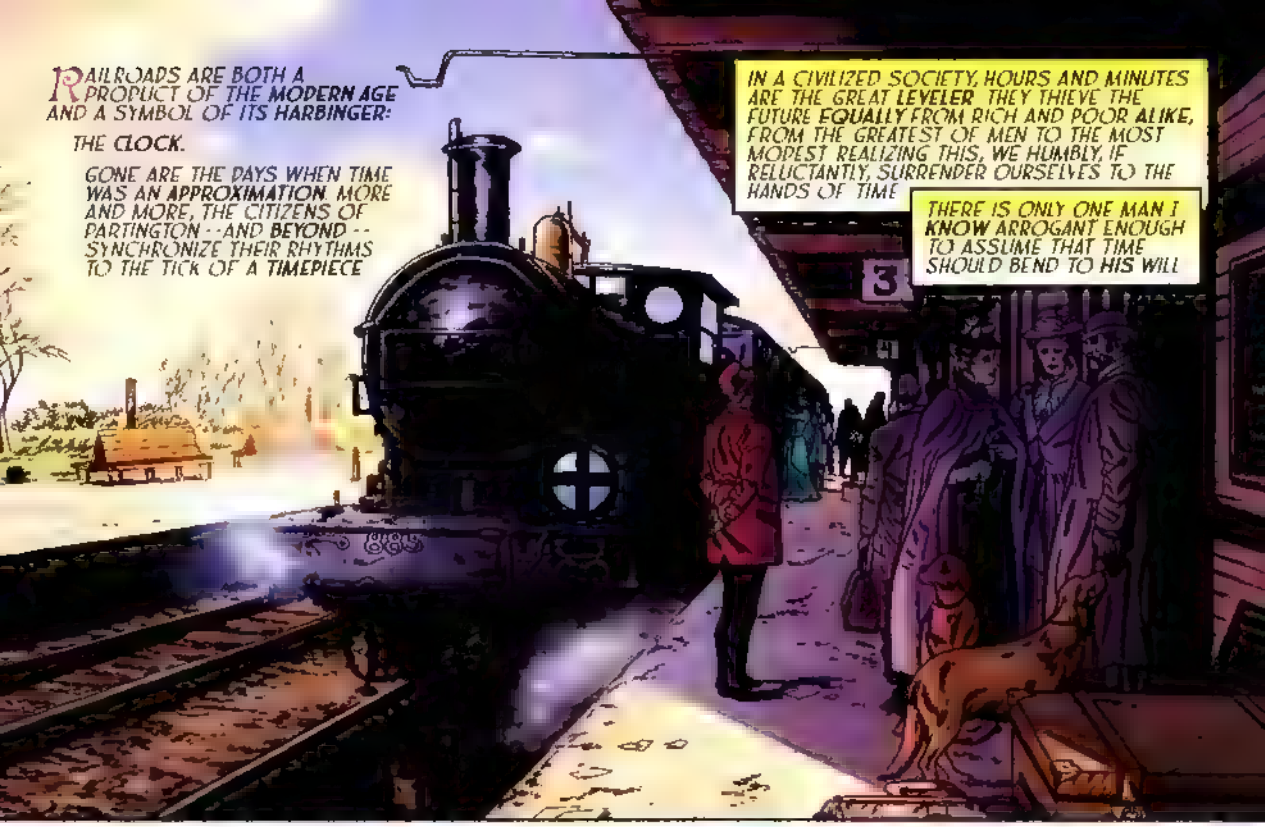
RAILROADS ARE BOTH A PRODUCT OF THE MODERN AGE AND A SYMBOL OF ITS HARBINGER: THE CLOCK.
GONE ARE THE DAYS WHEN TIME WAS AN APPROXIMATION. MORE AND MORE, THE CITIZENS OF PARTINGTON--AND BEYOND--SYNCHRONIZE THEIR RHYTHMS TO THE TICK OF A TIMEPIECE
IN A CIVILIZED SOCIETY, HOURS AND MINUTES ARE THE GREAT LEVELER. THEY THIEVE THE FUTURE EQUALLY FROM RICH AND POOR ALIKE, FROM THE GREATEST OF MEN TO THE MOST MODEST. REALIZING THIS, WE HUMBLY, IF RELUCTANTLY, SURRENDER OURSELVES TO THE HANDS OF TIME
THERE IS ONLY ONE MAN I KNOW ARROGANT ENOUGH TO ASSUME THAT TIME SHOULD BEND TO HIS WILL
3

SIMON!
SIMON, THE TRAIN IS LEAVING! WHERE ARE YOU?

A PENNY FOR A VICTIM OF FATE GUV? I BEG O'YA
WHY? YOU'VE NO NEED TO

THERE'S YOUR PICKPOCKET, OFFICER

WELL, I'LL BE--!
SO THAT'S THE DEVIL WHAT'S BEEN NICKIN' WALLETS ALL OVER THE STATION! NEVER LOOKED AT 'IM TWICE WHAT WI' HIS LITTLE INFIRMITY AN' ALL! HOW'D YOU KNOW, MR ARCHARD?
HIS WATCH. IT WAS POCKETED ON THE SAME SIDE AS HIS MISSING ARM
A MAN WITHOUT A RIGHT LIMB WOULD POCKET HIS WATCH ON THE LEFT

THERE WERE OTHER FACTORS OF COURSE THIS MAN IS...
SIMONNNN!
NOT MY HIGHEST PRIORITY AT THE MOMENT
CARRY ON

AND SEE WHO'S MISSING A WATCH!
I--
CORBLIMEY! THAT'S MINE
RTHERN RAIL STATION

WHAT WERE YOU *DOING* BACK THERE?

EXERCISING THE POWER OF *OBSERVATION*

BECAUSE IT'S TOO WEAK TO NOTICE A *MOVING TRAIN*?

AMUSING

WHEN I PASS OUT FROM *EXCESSIVE LAUGHTER* DO REVIVE ME

-HNNNNF-

WHAT IN THE *WORLD*

COSMETICS

I WAS *UNAWARE* THAT LIPSTICK WAS SOLD BY THE *POUND*

A LADY CAN*NOT* TRAVEL *WITHOUT* HER *MAKEUP* SIMON

HEAVY OR *NOT*, YOU'D BE *SURPRISED* HOW USEFUL THAT CASE CAN BE

WERE I IN NEED OF AN *ANCHOR*

TICKETS!

I HAVE OURS RIGHT *HERE*, ONOUR TOO. THE FIRST OF *MANY* ON THIS JOURNEY

WE CHANGE TRAINS ONCE?

TWICE ACCORDING TO MY MOST RECENT *INFORMATION*

THE *GYPSIES* WE SEEK ARE CAMPED OUTSIDE OF A REMOTE VILLAGE CALLED *TELESTROUD*. THAT'S OUR *DESTINATION*

AND NO MORE IS SAID, AT LEAST NOT FOR A WHILE. RESIGNED TO SILENCE, I CONTEMPLATE THE SCENERY AFTER ALL ..

IT'S NOT AS IF ANYTHING NOTEWORTHY IS HAPPENING INSIDE THE CAR

JUST A DAY AGO, SIMON AND I WERE ATTACKED BY A MAN I KNOW ONLY AS LIGHTBOURNE .

SIMON'S FORMER PARTNER, BELIEVED DECEASED.

WHATEVER LIGHTBOURNE'S MOTIVES MAY HAVE BEEN, ONLY SIMON KNOWS. BUT THEY CUT HIM TO THE QUICK

PROVOKING FROM HIM A STUNNINGLY UNCHARACTERISTIC AND WORRISOME SHOW OF ANGER, THE MYSTERY OF WHICH I AM DETERMINED TO SOLVE

SIMON MITIGATED THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF HAVING LOST LIGHTBOURNE'S TRAIL BY INSPECTING THE KERCHIEF LIGHTBOURNE LEFT BEHIND

AMATEUR DEDUCTI

ONE WHOSE UNIQUE PATTERN AND STYLE OF WEAVING BETRAYED ITS ORIGINS WITH A CERTAIN GYPSY TRIBE EXISTING FRUSTRATINGLY ENOUGH

HALFWAY ACROSS THE CONTINENT

TWENTY HOURS, TWO TRAINS AND ONE MOUNTAIN RANGE LATER, MY EXPERTISE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES HELPS US COMMUNICATE WITH THE CONDUCTOR

OSTENSIBLY

JETE PARNJAN FLHAGRI TELESTROUD DOLSUNOR

DOLSUNOR?

DOLSUNOR!

OH, DEAR

THAT'S IT PAY NO ATTENTION

KEEP YOUR BACK TURNED, SIMON AS HARP LIST ONE SECOND MORE

FOR VENGEANCE IS AT LAST UPON YOU, THE VENGEANCE OF

LIKE CARRYING AN ANVIL

FWUMP

→HHUKKK!←

NNNNEE!-

BLASTED CASE!

SIMON, BE CAREFUL! YOU DIDN'T HIT ANYONE DID YOU?

→HKKKE

DNNT SWWLLOW DNNT

→GULP!←

IF SO, I'M SURE THEY'D SPEAK UP

APPARENTLY NOT, THEN

TSK! TSK!

I WARNED YOU PRETNARD WOULD FAIL ASSASSINATION'S A YOUNG MAN'S GAME NGEL

OR AT LEAST A CLEVER MAN'S AH, WELL

WELL, WE'RE THE OTHERS FROM THE NEXT TOWN. WARN THEM THAT PRETNARD'S INITIATION MET WITH TERMINAL FAILURE

THERE ARE ALWAYS OTHERS WHO WISH TO JOIN PARTINGTON'S MOST EXCLUSIVE GENTLEMEN'S CLUB

WHAT'S HE SAYING? WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE PROBLEM WITH TELES-

DOLSUNOR!

APPARENTLY, THIS TRAIN DOESN'T GO TO TELESTROUD

BUT IT'S ON THE RAIL LINE! WHY CAN'T IT--

IT'S NOT THAT IT CAN'T STOP IT WON'T STOP

FOR SOME REASON EVERYONE ON THIS TRAIN IS UTTERLY CONVINCED THAT TELESTROUD IS TO BE AVOIDED AT ALL COST. SOME NONSENSE ABOUT IT BEING HAUNTED, THOUGH I COULD BE MISTRANSLATING

EITHER WAY, WE'LL HAVE TO GO ON TO THE NEXT STATION AND DOUBLE BACK SOMEHOW

OR

OH, NO. NO, NO "OR" THERE IS NO "OR," SIMON!

NO

"OR!"

IS THAT CLEAR?

NOT REALLY NO

AAAAH!

GO LIMP! YOU'LL BE FINE!

DEFINE "FINE"!

OH! OH!

OH OH THUMP TONK

OOOOF!

WHUFF!

UNNGH!

OOO...

I'M ALIVE

WHAT WAS THAT?

I SAID, I'M ALIVE

AND, I MIGHT ADD, PERFECTLY COMPOSED AND ON MY FEET UNLIKE A CERTAIN DETECTIVE I COULD

NAN-

AAAAH!

GO LIM-

SHUT UP!

I BELIEVE THAT WOULD BE YOUR COSMETICS BAG?

...S NOT A BURDEN

♫♫

YOU MAY STOP PRETENDING THAT YOUR LUGGAGE PROVIDES SUITABLE TRANSPORT, EMMA

♫

WHO'S PRETENDING? GO ON AHEAD BY FOOT I THINK I SHALL FLOAT INTO TOWN

THEN BY ALL MEANS, ENJOY THE RIDE YOU'LL MAKE EXCELLENT TIME, WHAT WITH THE WATERFALL

WATERFALL?

I SEE YOU RECONSIDERED YOUR *SEA CRUISE*

AND ABANDON *YOU?* WHEN THE *COMPANY* S *SO DELIGHTFUL?*

SHALL WE *WALK,* OR WOULD YOU PREFER TO LEAP AND *TUMBLE* SOME MORE?

YOU MIGHT WISH TO APPLY THAT *RAPIER WIT* TO THE PROBLEM AT *HAND*

PROBLEM?

DETERMINING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LIGHTBOURNE AND THE GYPSIES IS EASIER *SAID* THAN *DONE*

WE'LL HAVE TO EARN THEIR *TRUST* WHICH, DEPENDING UPON THEIR *LOYALTIES,* COULD BE *DIFFICULT*

YOU'RE RIGHT. I NEVER CONSIDERED THAT THEY MIGHT BE *HOSTILE* TOWARDS US HAVE YOU A *STRATEGY* IN MIND?

YES

ASK THE *VILLAGERS* FOR *THEIR* THOUGHTS

EXCEPT

THERE *ARE* NO VILLAGERS

IT'S NOT A *GHOST TOWN* THERE ARE *MANY* SIGNS OF LIFE

A CAGED BIRD

A CHILD'S BALL BOUNCING DOWN THE STREET

AND YET

NOT A *SINGLE HUMAN BEING* IN SIGHT

WHAT NOW?

WITH THE LIKELIHOOD *DWINDLING* OF AN ENTIRE POPULATION SPRINGING UP AND SHOUTING "*SURPRISE!*", I SUGGEST WE FIND A WAY TO APPEASE OUR *APPETITE* AND *FATIGUE*. I TAKE IT THIS IS AN *INN*

K.O.

CAN YOU READ THE *SIGN?*

THE *EMPTY STEIN*

FITTING

SIMON, WHERE COULD THESE PEOPLE HAVE *GONE?* WHY WOULD THEY *LEAVE?* HOW LONG HAVE THEY BEEN *MISSING?*

DAYS? *WEEKS?*

HOURS, LOOK

FRESHLY PREPARED FOOD

FOR *WHO?* SURELY THERE CAN'T BE *GUESTS* UPSTAIRS

SURELY IN FACT THE REGISTER SHOWS THAT NO ONE HAS TAKEN A ROOM HERE IN *DECADES*

HELLO? IS *ANYONE* HERE?

GATHER YOUR *BAGS* WE'RE GOING *UP*

I DON'T -HUFF- SUPPOSE YOU'D -HUFF- BE INTERESTED IN HELPING ME WITH MY-

WHAT DO *YOU* THINK?

THAT ALL I WANT -HUFF- IS TO FIND A WAY -HUFF- TO DROP THIS ON YOUR FOOT

TRY DROPPING IT *IN THERE*, INSTEAD. CATCH YOUR *BREATH*

I'LL CONTINUE THE *SEARCH*

YOU'RE NOT FOOLING *ME*, SIMON. YOU'RE EVERY BIT AS TIRED AS I AM. IT'S BEEN A *VERY* LONG DAY, AND WE

-- WE --

SIMON, DID YOU *HEAR* THAT? THERE *MUST* BE SOMEONE *DOWNSTAIRS!*

OR MORE ACCURATELY

SOMEONES

BUT THE ENTIRE *TAVERN* WAS

AND *NOW*

AS IF *NOTHING* UNUSUAL HAD

DO YOU THINK THEY'VE EVEN *NOTICED* US?

=GASP=

I THINK SO. YES

WE SHOULD SPEAK TO WHOEVER IS IN *CHARGE*. I SUGGEST YOU *ASK* THEM BEFORE THEY *BEAT* US TO DEATH

NO *NEED*, YOUNG MAN I RECOGNIZE THE LANGUAGE. IF YOU TALK *SLOW*, I'LL TRY TO KEEP *UP*

NAME'S *OSGOLD* TELESTROJE'S *BURGOMEISTER*. YES? EXCUSE *KARAN* FOR BEING *STARTLED* WE DON'T *GET* MANY *VISITORS* HERE

AND WHAT *DOES* BRING YOU TWO SO FAR OUT OF YOUR *WAY*?

PASSING *THROUGH* THOUGHT WE'D *REST* FOR THE NIGHT

OH, BY AL, *MEANS*! BUT YOU *MUST* BE *HUNGRY*! WITH MY *COMPLIMENTS*... *DINE* WITH US, MISTER

ARC HARD THANK YOU

IF SIMON EXPECTED HIS NAME TO *MEAN* SOMETHING HERE, HE'S *DISAPPOINTED*. NO ONE REACTS.

SIMON'S *QUIET*. CLEARLY, HIS PLAN IS TO PLAY *INNOCENT* FOR A WHILE. WISELY SOAK *UP* INFORMATION RATHER THAN LOSE PATIENCE AND TIP OUR *HAND*

SO HOW IS IT WE WALKED INTO A COMPLETELY DESERTED VILLAGE THIS AFTERNOON BURGOMEISTER?
WRONG AGAIN
DESERTED? TELESTROUD? WHY I MUST NOT BE AS FLUENT IN THE LANGUAGE AS I THOUGHT, YOUNG MAN, IF I HEARD YOU SAY WE WEREN'T HERE
HEH WISH WE COULD JUST TAKE OFF AND PROLIC ABOUT, BUT THE TOWN CAN'T RUN ITSELF
NO, SIR MAYBE SOME FOLKS WERE OUT SHOPPING OR SUCH
SIR, UNTIL FIVE MINUTES AGO, THE STREETS AND HOMES OF TELESTROUD WERE TOTALLY EMPTY WHERE WERE YOU HIDING?
AGAIN MR ARCHARD, IS IT? -AGAIN, YOU MUST BE MISTAKEN NOW PLEASE ENJOY OUR HOSPITALITY
OH, WE'D LOVE TO, IN FACT, WE'D LIKE TO SEE MORE OF THE TOWN YOU WON'T MIND IF WE LOOK ABOUT?
NOT AT ALL
HERE WE'LL HAVE HUGNAR ESCORT YOU
WE WON'T REQUIRE AN ESCORT
I INSIST
I'M SURE YOU DO, VERY WE...
YOU LOOK PUZZLED
ONLY AT EVERYTHING YOU DO. THAT WAS THE MOST UNUSUAL ATTEMPT I'VE EVER SEEN AT MAINTAINING A LOW PROFILE. WHY DID YOU CHALLENGE THE MAYOR?
BECAUSE WE WOULDN'T BE IN ANY LESS DANGER HAD I NOT--
AND BECAUSE STAYING WOULDN'T HAVE HELPED US FIND OUR GYPSIES
NOW, DO YOU MIND DETERMINING HOW FREE WE ARE TO SPEAK?
SO I'VE AN IDEA, HANDSOME. WHY DON'T YOU AND I GO FIND OURSELVES A NICE QUIET HAYSTACK?
PULSFOR ACH NUGEN?
NOT A WORD BUT HE THINKS YOU'RE CUTE
SO NOTED NOW
TAKE IN THE SIGHTS AND TELL ME THEY DON'T BOTHER YOU CHURCHGOERS ENTERING A SERVICE
CHILDREN AT SCHOOL... A GREAT DEAL OF MANUAL LABOR...
IT SEEMS TERRIBLY LATE FOR THAT SORT OF ACTIVITY, BUT PERHAPS THAT'S HOW THESE PEOPLE LIVE
THEN AGAIN WHO FISHES AT NIGHT?
MY POINT PRECISELY

RATHER THAN ASK THE TOWNSPEOPLE ABOUT THE *GYPSIES* SINCE THE LESS THEY KNOW OF OUR *MOTIVES*, THE *BETTER* --

-- I NOW PREFER TO ASK THE *GYPSIES* ABOUT THE *TOWNSPEOPLE*

AND WE'LL COME ACROSS THEM *WHERE* ?

ALMOST CERTAINLY ENCAMPED NEAR THE *RIVER* THIS WAY

TENDING THE *FIELDS* BY *MOONLIGHT* IT'S POSIT VELY *EERIE* AND --

--*SIMON!*

<THERE THEY *ARE!*>

<STRIKE *FAST!* HEADS AND HEARTS! *TAKE THEM!*>

THE *GYPSIES*. WHAT ARE THEY *YELLING*? THREATS?

MORE LIKE *PROMISES*. GOOD *LORD*, SIMON IT'S A *MASSACRE!*

OSSGOLD! OSSGOLD!

THEY WON'T FIGHT ALONE FOR LONG. OUR TOUR GUIDES OFF TO WARN THE TOWN

SIMON WHAT HAVE WE STUMBLED INTO? I'LL TRANSLATE AS BEST I CAN, BUT

<GIVE THEM BACK! GIVE US BACK OUR DAUGHTERS!>

<YOU HAVE STOLEN THEM FOR YOUR UNHOLY RITES!>

<RETURN THEM OR FACE OUR VENGEANCE!>

<BROTHERS TO ARMS! NOCK YOUR BOLTS AND LET FLY!>

UNHOLY WHAT?

I... I'M NOT CERTAIN. ALL I KNOW IS THAT THE FARMERS ARE ARMED

AND THE TIDE OF BATTLE HAS QUICKLY TURNED IN THEIR FAVOR!

AAAAGGHH!

<BY HELL ITSELF! WE KNEW NOT OF THEIR WEAPONS! RETREAT, I SAY! RETREAT... FOR NOW!>

<BUT MARK MY WORDS, YOU GHOULS -- WE WILL RETURN, AND WHEN WE DO...>

<WE SHALL FREE OUR YOUNG WOMEN FROM THE CLUTCHES OF THE UNDEAD -- OR DIE TRYING!>

AND THESE ARE THE VAGABONDS WITH WHOM WE HOPE TO STRIKE A PEACEFUL DIALOGUE? SIMON, THEIR FEROCITY

WAIT -- I'M--

THE VILLAGERS' THEIR ABSENCE IN DAYLIGHT... THEIR NOCTURNAL PROWLINGS...

EVEN... EVEN MYTHS HAVE SOME BASIS IN FACT. SIMON, COULD THESE PEOPLE ACTUALLY

ACTUALLY BE VAMP-

SIMON? SIMON, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

TO STOCK UP ON GARLIC AND WOODEN STAKES

REALLY?

NO

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE *SMUG* ABOUT IT

HAVE WE BEEN *INTRODUCED?*

SIGH

POINT *TAKEN* SO WHERE *ARE* WE GOING?

BACK TO THE *INN* EARLIER I NOTICED SOMETHING *PECULIAR* IN THE *KITCHEN* THAT WOULD EXPLAIN *MUCH* -

AND IF MY SUSPICIONS ARE CORRECT I SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIND

ENJOY YOUR LITTLE *TOUR*, MR ARCHARD

OH!

FORGIVE THE SPARSE *RECEPTION* HUGNAR ALERTED US TO THE *COMMOTION* NEARBY IT'S BEING *HANDLED* BY THE TOWNSFOLK

SUCH *EXCITEMENT* YOU MUST BE *EXHAUSTED*. HUGNAR WILL SHOW YOU TO YOUR *ROOMS*, FRESHLY *MADE*

SWEET *DREAMS*

WE DIDN'T ASK FOR ROOMS

NONETHELESS YOU CAN'T *POSSIBLY* BE *SURPRISED* THAT THEY'RE BEING *OFFERED*

SO WHAT DO WE DO *NOW?*

TRY TO GET SOME *REST* -- BUT LOCK YOUR *DOOR* AND SLEEP *LIGHTLY*

BUT WHAT IF THESE PEOPLE *ARE* VAM

DON'T WASTE MY TIME MAKING ME LISTEN TO THE REST OF THAT SENTENCE

PLAY *ALONG* DEMONSTRATE *COOPERATION* FOR THE BENEFIT OF OSGOLD'S ASKWIT *THUG*

WE WANT HIM TO REPORT TO OSGOLD THAT WE'RE TUCKED SAFELY *AWAY* FOR THE NIGHT

WHEN, IN FACT

YOUR IMMEDIATE TASK IS TO MAKE CERTAIN HE TAKES HIS EYES OFF OF *ME*

DONE

<OH, HUGNAR IT'S SO *DARK* IN HERE CAN YOU *GUIDE* ME ??>

SUCCESS THE MOMENT WE'RE OUT OF LINE OF SIGHT, I HEAR SIMON'S DOOR CLOSE

BUT I'VE NO DOUBT HIS ROOM IS VACANT

I'VE NO NOTION WHAT IT IS HE'S SEARCHING FOR

BUT I HOPE HE FINDS IT
SAFELY

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The TELESTROUD NIGHTLY
Insight for the Unseen
One Schilling

GYPSIES ATTACK!

GODLESS VAGABONDS INVADE

Commencing four evenings past, the citizens of Telestroud have found themselves under constant threat of attack by a squalid band of pagan travelers encamped on the shores of the river nearby.

Storming through our fields and streets on horseback, sabers drawn, they terrorize the god-fearing townsfolk, evincing not the slightest sign of remorse as they deliver their singular brand of terror.

Burgomeister Osgold this evening outlined a plan of action for ridding our land of this indevout plague. All healthy Telestroud males are to assemble outside the Empty Stein Tavern tomorrow morning promptly at dawn. Appropriate headwear and clothing are, for obvious reasons, strongly advised.

ATTENTION

Citizens are asked to keep close watch on two foreigners entering the town of Telestroud under suspicious circumstances. They are suspected of motives unwelcome:

SIMON ARCHARD

EMMA BISHOP

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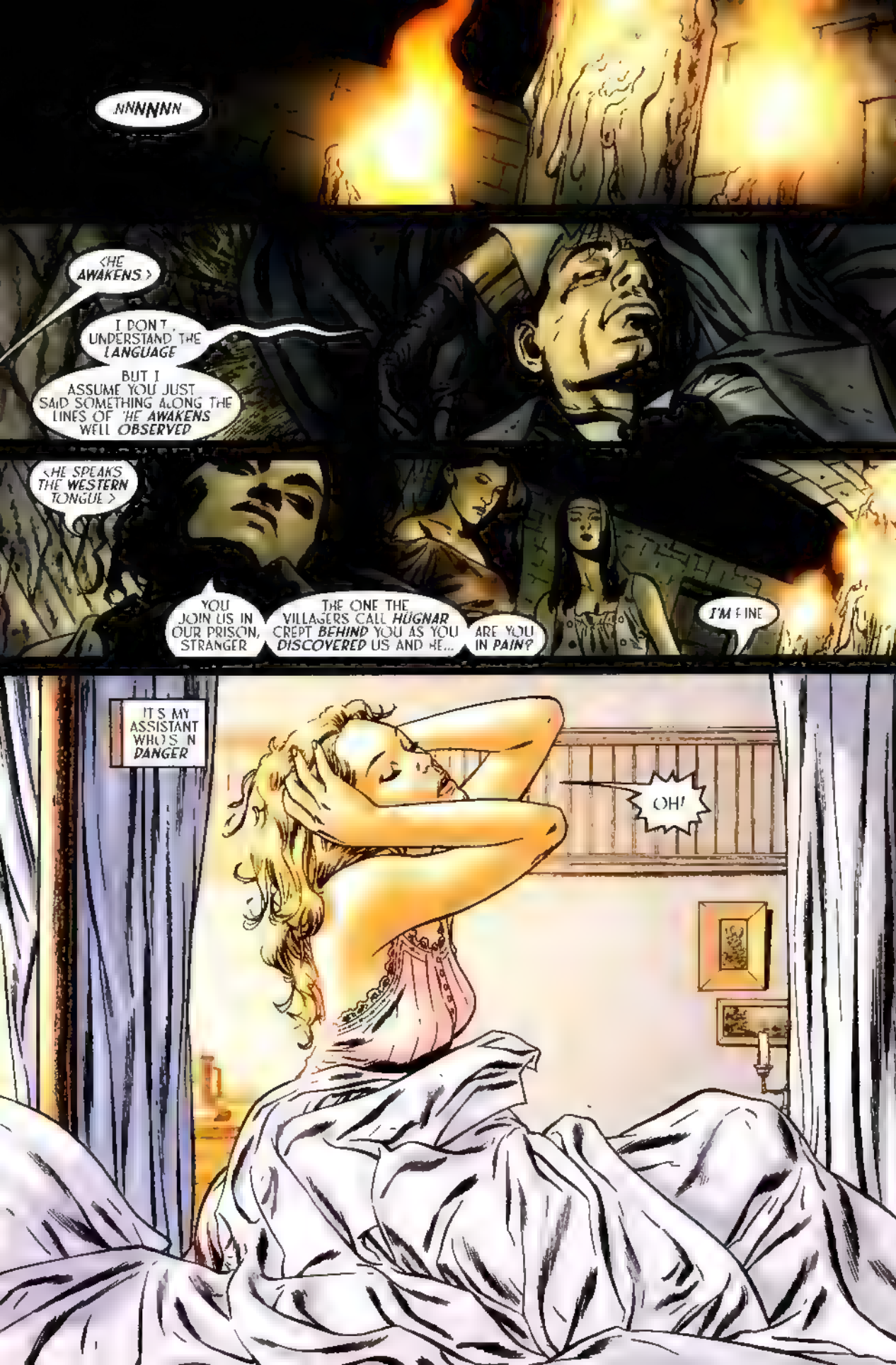
NNNNNN
<HE AWAKENS>
I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE LANGUAGE
BUT I ASSUME YOU JUST SAID SOMETHING ALONG THE LINES OF "HE AWAKENS" WELL OBSERVED
<HE SPEAKS THE WESTERN TONGUE>
YOU JOIN US IN OUR PRISON, STRANGER
THE ONE THE VILLAGERS CALL HUGNAR CREPT BEHIND YOU AS YOU DISCOVERED US AND HE...
ARE YOU IN PAIN?
I'M FINE
IT'S MY ASSISTANT WHO'S IN DANGER
OH!

DAYLIGHT? HOW CAN THERE BE

SIGH- BECAUSE I FELL ASLEEP, THAT'S HOW SO MUCH FOR KEEPING MY GUARD UP

LUCKILY, NO HORRIBLE FATE BEFELL ME IN THE NIGHT I'M GREETED BY ANOTHER BRIGHT MORNING IN THE SMALL HAMLET OF TELESTROUD

AS INDICATED BY THE COMPLETE ABSENCE OF PEOPLE

WHEN SIMON AND I STUMBLED INTO THIS TINY BURG YESTERDAY, NOT A SOUL WAS AROUND THE STREETS AND BUILDINGS WERE UTTERLY DESERTED. ONLY AFTER DUSK DID THE NATIVES APPEAR

THOUGH WHEN SIMON ACCUSED THEM OF HIDING, THEY DENIED EVERYTHING CLAIMED WE WERE MISTAKEN

SIMON?

NO SIGN OF HIM ANYWHERE I KNOW HE ELECTED TO INVESTIGATE

WHICH MEANS HE'LL RETURN ANY MOMENT TO TELL ME HOW HE UNRAVELED THE WHOLE MYSTERY CLUED ONLY BY A BROKEN SHOELACE AND A MELON RIND

BEST TO PUT ON MY FACE, THEN NO POINT IN APPEARING IN PUBLIC BOTH BEFUDDLED AND BLEMISHED--

NNNNEF!

ALL RIGHT SO MY COSMETICS CASE DOES HAVE A RATHER ELEPHANTINE HEFT THERE BUT IT'S AN ADMISSION I'LL TAKE TO MY GRAVE

MEANING I'D RATHER DIE THAN ENDURE ANOTHER ORATIM FROM SIMON REGARDING ITS USELESSNESS

WE'RE --

YOU'RE THE WIVES AND DAUGHTERS OF THE GYPSY TRIBE CAMPED NEAR THE RIVER

HOW DID YOU --?

DURING THE BROAD LIGHT OF DAY, MYSTERIOUS UNSEEN FORCES DRAGGED YOU AWAY AND TO THIS DUNGEON UNDERNEATH THE INN

CAN YOU TELL ME WHY?

SO THE LOCAL MEN COULD COULD

--OULD MATE WITH US

AND THAT COMPLETES THE PUZZLE. THE TOWNSFOLK ENSCONCE THEMSELVES HERE BETWEEN DUSK AND DAWN, YES?

YES! RESTING NEAR THEIR NATIVE SOIL SO THEY MAY ROAM AND FEED BY THE MOONGLOW AS VAMPIRES DO!

INDEED. THEIR FANGS SHARPENED BY LEPRECHAUNS WHILE THEY RIDE THEIR UNICORNS TO THE MOON

VAMPIRES ARE THE STUFF OF FICTION MY INTERESTS LIE SOLELY IN FACT

THE TELESTROUDIANS DO HIDE FROM SUNLIGHT, THAT MUCH IS PLAIN I'VE A THEORY WHY BUT I'LL HARDLY PROVE IT FROM IN HERE.

HOW DID YOU FIND US?
EARLIER, I SAW A NUMBER OF COVERED DISHES IN THE KITCHEN UPSTAIRS
SIMPLE MEALS THAT I DIDN'T SEE BEING SERVED IN THE TAVERN
--YET HAD TO HAVE BEEN PREPARED FOR SOMEONE
FOLLOW ME, AND HURRY YOUR CAPTORS WILL RETURN TO DEAL WITH ME DECISIVELY--
ONCE I HEARD THE GYPSIES LAMENT OVER THEIR ABDUCTED WOMEN
THE CONNECTION WAS OBVIOUS
--ONCE THEY'RE DONE WITH EMMA
WHAT'S PARTICULARLY FRUSTRATING, OF COURSE, IS THAT DISCOVERING THE SECRET OF TELESTROUD ISN'T AN OBJECTIVE IT'S A PERIPHERAL CONCERN
STILL, IF WE CAN SOMEHOW AID THE GYPSIES WE'VE TRAVELED HALFWAY ACROSS THE CONTINENT TO QUERY, PERHAPS THEY'LL BE MORE FORTHCOMING WITH ANSWERS
WHICH MEANS SOMEONE WILL TALK TO ME
IT'S NOT MY IMAGINATION DESPITE OUR BUILDING QUITE THE INVESTIGATIVE RESUMÉ TOGETHER, SIMON, A MAN ORDINARILY AS WARM AS A COBRA AND TWICE AS TALKATIVE, IS TRUSTING ME LESS NOT MORE
HE MAINTAINS HIS SATURNINE COUNTENANCE AS REGARDS HIS FORMER PARTNER, LIGHTBOURNE I THINK I'VE BEEN EXTRAORDINARILY PATIENT WAITING FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE MAN GIVEN THAT HE CAME AFTER ME WITH AN AXE
A THEORY ABOUT SIMON'S BEHAVIOR IS BEGINNING TO TAKE SHAPE INSIDE MY OWN HEAD, BUT THAT'S A MATTER FOR LATER
RIGHT NOW, THE PERIL DU JOUR IS
HHGGHHPPH!
<DON'T WORRY>
<HURTS ONLY A MOMENT>
MMMMPH!

MMMHHH!

A GHOST? A SPIRIT?

MAKEUP SMEARED HANDS FACE

HUGNAR

GRIP IRON

<AIN'T GONNA KILL YA, MISSY STOP SQUIRMIN' YOUGHT TJUST LIE BACK >

>GNNNH<

< AN ENJOY IT>

TOO STRONG CRUSHING ME

<GLAD I'S THE ONE THEY SENT F R YA >

<I AIN'T NEVER GOT TGO FIRST >

WHOK

I DISTINCTLY REMEMBER USING LOCK, YOUR AND "DOOR" IN THE SAME SENTENCE

SIMON! THERE YOU ARE!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

A BIT STUNNED.

FROM A BLOW?

FROM WHAT SOUNDS STARTLINGLY LIKE CONCERN

I GATHER INFORMATION FOR A LIVING DON'T READ TOO MUCH INTO IT

AND WHO HAVE WE HERE?

THE CAPTIVES THE GYPSIES WERE RAILING ABOUT EARLIER YOU WERE ABOUT TO JOIN THEM

AS A CORPSE, YES.

NO HUGNAR WASN'T HERE TO MURDER YOU.

HE WAS HERE TO BREED WITH YOU.

FLOORBOARDS --!

SOMEONE'S COMING!

SIMON, MY POWDER!

AND TO THINK HOW YOU CATERWAULED ABOUT MY COSMETICS SORRY NOW?

YES

SORRY I HIRED AN ASSISTANT WHO GLOATS

BURGOMEISTER OSGOLD

WE NEED TO TALK

I--I'VE NOTHING TO SAY TO YOU!

GOOD MORNING

I QUITE BEG TO DIFFER. SO MUCH MYSTERY IN TELESTROUD HOW BEST TO SHED LIGHT ON IT?

PERHAPS WE WALK OUTSIDE? SUCH A LOVELY, SUNNY DAY.

NO! NO! !

YOU WILL VERIFY MY CONCLUSIONS

WE'LL BE DEALING IN THE RELATIVELY NEW SCIENCES OF GENETICS AND ATOMIC MATTER, SO TRY TO FOLLOW

THE TELESTROUDIANS POSSESS A PECULIAR--AND RATHER SEVERE PHOTOSYNTHETIC DERMAL CONDITION

SOMETHING AKIN TO ALBINISM?

MARGINALLY BUT FAR MORE DRASTIC

...IKELY ITS ORIGINS LIE IN SOME SORT OF SPONTANEOUS MUTATION. BUT GIVEN A VILLAGE THIS REMOTE, A CENTURY OR SO OF INBREEDING COULD EASILY DRIVE A RECESSIVE GENE TO FULL DOMINANCE

ALL HUMANS ARE SENSITIVE TO SUNLIGHT, OSGOLD. IT REACTS CHEMICALLY WITH OUR SKIN, EVEN THROUGH LIGHT CLOTHING

YOU'RE FOLLOWING ME SO FAR?

I

YES

IN ORDINARY PEOPLE, SUCH SENSITIVITY CAUSES SUNBURN AND THE SLOUGHING OFF OF DEAD EPIDERMAL CELLS.

WITH YOU, IT RELEASES SOMETHING MORE FROM THE SKIN QUITE PAINFULLY, I MIGHT ADD.

MICROSCOPIC PARTICLES THEORETICIANS CALL THEM "ELECTRONS"

IN FACT, THE SUN'S RAYS CREATE AROUND YOU CLOUDS OF FREE ELECTRONS--CLOUDS WHICH, SCIENCE SAYS ABSORB ALL LIGHT -

MAKING YOU, IN EFFECT, INVISIBLE--

--AND HELPLESS.

HELPLESS?

WITH SO LITTLE LIGHT REACHING THEIR *EYES*, THE R SIGHT IS BADLY, THOUGH NOT IMPOSSIBLY, *LIMITED* --

--WHICH IS WHAT FORCES THEM UNDERGROUND BY DAY INTO THE ONE ROOM IN TOWN BUILT DEEP ENOUGH TO FULLY *SHIELD* THEM

BUT WHY DO YOU *STEAL* US FROM OUR *BEDS*? DO YOU HOLD US SOMEHOW *RESPONSIBLE* FOR THIS CONDITION?

ON THE *CONTRARY*, MY DEAR. IT'S YOU WHO'LL *SAVE* US

EVERYTHING MR. ARCHARP SAYS IS *TRUE*. BUT THERE IS *MORE* DESPITE OUR *PRAYERS*, WITH EACH GENERATION, OUR SENSITIVITY *INCREASES*. THE CONDITION *WORSENS*.

OUR ONLY HOPE IS TO BREED IT *OUT*, BUT WE CANNOT WITHOUT *FRESH BLOOD*.

AND GATHERING WOMEN FROM NEIGHBORING *TOWNS*.

WAS *IMPOSSIBLE*. THERE *ARE* NO NEIGHBORING TOWNS, MR. ARCHARP.

THE NEAREST VILLAGE IS SEVERAL DAYS' TRAVEL.

AND EVEN THE *CLOAK-SWADDLED* YOUNG MEN SUCCUMB TO THE AGONY OF EXPOSURE BEFORE VOYAGING *HALF* THAT FAR.

HOPE WAS *BEYOND* US.

UNTIL A MERCIFUL LORD BROUGHT A TRAVELING TROUPE OF *GYPSIES* TO OUR LAND. TAWDRY, FILTHY, VAGABOND *HEATHENS*. THEY WERE, HARDLY FIT TO LIE WITH *DOGS*...

BUT IN A *PINCH*...

THE *MEN*, IT WAS DECIDED, WERE OF LITTLE *USE* TO US. WE'D HOPED THEY'D FLEE IN *TERROR*, FRANKLY, BUT SINCE THEY INSTEAD COME AT NIGHT TO *ATTACK* US.

THE *VILLAGERS*, *OSGOLD*! THEY'RE *NOT* IN THE *DUNGEON*!

WHERE HAVE THEY *GONE*?

WHO SAYS THEY'VE GONE *ANYWHERE*?

I'VE BROUGHT A FEW WITH ME THE REST?
AS I SAY, THEY CAN'T ENDURE MUCH TRAVEL BUT IF IT'S A MATTER OF EXTERMINATING PESTS...
WE... THEY CAN CERTAINLY MAKE IT AS FAR AS A GYPSY ENCAMPMENT
EMMA!
IF YOU'VE HURT HER, I SWEAR--
--I'LL NEVER HEAR THE END OF IT!
HOW TOUCHING. I SEE QUITE A FUTURE FOR YOU IN CHARM SCHOOLS.
TEACHING?
ATTENDING
YOU SAID OUR ATTACKER'S VISION WAS LIMITED? MIGHT I SUGGEST
--THAT A FLASH CHARGE MIGHT BLIND THEM ALTOGETHER
AAAAH!
CAN'T SEE
MY EYES! MY EYES!
GO! HURRY!
HURRY!
NOT ANOTHER WORD IS SPOKEN
WE'VE NO TIME FOR REPARTEE. WE HAVE TO WARN THE GYPSIES OF THE UPCOMING ATTACK
GUIDED BY THE WOMEN, WE THUNDER TOWARDS THEIR CAMP AT BREAKNECK SPEED--
--AND ARRIVE--
--TOO LATE

THE GYPSIES ARE UNDER FULL SIEGE--AND BY WHAT, THEY'VE NO IDEA

DESPERATELY, THEY LOOK FOR SOMETHING TO HIT

ENTER SIMON

<YOU! YOUR PEOPLE DID THIS! OUT COMES YOUR HEART, YOU DAMNABLE-->

<FATHER, NO! HE'S NOT FROM HERE! HE SAVED US!>

<FROM WHAT? DEATH IS THE WIND ITSELF! OUR BROTHERS FALL MURDERED! HOW CAN WE FIGHT THIS SORCERY?>

HE SAYS--

I CAN GUESS!

THIS WAY!

TELL THEM TO FOLLOW ME!

TO WHERE? HOW DO WE EVEN KNOW WE'RE RETREATING?

FASTER! WE'RE ALMOST THERE!

WHAT?

SIMON, I CAN BARELY HEAR YOU! THE WATERFALL--!

EXACTLY

WH--

SIMON, WHAT ARE YOU SUGGESTING? DO WE JUMP?

NO.

WE WAIT.

OF COURSE

THEY'RE COMING. STAND READY.

NOT YET...

..NOT YET...

NOW!

ATTACK!

BEAUTIFUL. IN ONE STROKE, THE TABLES ARE TURNED. THE VILLAGERS ONLY REAL WEAPON WAS SURPRISE. TAKE THAT AWAY.

<YOU DARE COME AFTER US? WE MEANT YOU NO HARM->

<--BUT THAT HAS CHANGED!>

AND KNIVES AND STAFFS BECOME QUITE THE ADVANTAGE!

THEY'RE FLEEING! TO THE WAGONS AND AWAY WHILE THEY GATHER THEIR WOUNDED!

THERE'LL BE NO PURSUIT! ISN'T THAT RIGHT, BURGOMEISTER?

FOR NOW, MR. ARCHARD. FOR NOW. BUT THERE WILL BE RETRIBUTION.. NO MATTER THAT IT TAKES A LIFETIME.

THE SUDDEN WINDWHISPER, THE GHOSTLY FOOTFALL SOMEDAY, WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT IT

THAT WILL BE US THIS, I SWEAR.

WONDERFUL. HOW DO I NOT WORRY ABOUT THAT FOREVER?

BY CONTINUING TO CARRY A COSMETICS BAG WITH ITS OWN GRAVITATIONAL FIELD.

LET'S GO.

AS SIMON PREDICTED, WE DEPART WITHOUT INCIDENT.

AS A MEASURE OF GRATITUDE, THE GYPSIES OFFER US PASSAGE TO THE NEXT TOWN SO THAT WE MIGHT CATCH A TRAIN HOME

EMMA WHAT ARE YOU WRITING?

THREE PAIRS SHOES TWO BONNETS FOUR PAIRS STOCKINGS

AN EXPENSE VOUCHER FOR ALL THE THINGS YOU MADE ME LEAVE BEHIND

WE ARE GREATLY IN YOUR DEBT, STRANGER WITHOUT YOU, IT'S DIFFICULT TO SAY WHO WOULD HAVE ENDURED A WORSE FATE OUR MEN OR OUR WOMEN

PLEASE ALLOW US TO SHOW OUR APPRECIATION NAME YOUR REWARD

INFORMATION MY NAME IS SIMON ARCHARD, AND--

YOU? YOU'RE

HMMH

WHAT?

I THOUGHT YOU'D BE TALLER, SOMEHOW

SORRY TO DISAPPOINT YOU

HARDLY ONE TO TALK, MYSELF

SO LIGHTBOURNE DID SPEND TIME WITH YOU. HE SPOKE OF SIMON?

OH, AT STULTIFYING LENGTH, AND FREQUENTLY, BUT NEVER KINDLY, EVEN THOUGH HE OWES HIS LIFE TO YOU

IN WHAT WAY?

BECAUSE THERE WERE TIMES WHEN ALL THAT KEPT HIS BODY AND SOUL ANCHORED TO THIS WORLD WAS HIS VOW OF REVENGE. HE LIVES LARGELY FOR ONE REASON, AS HE PUT IT.

TO KILL YOU AGAIN

AGAIN?

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN, AGAIN?

EMMA, PLEASE

SO LIGHTBOURNE CAME TO YOU WHEN I BELIEVED HIM DEAD WHY? I KNOW HE HAS SOME GYPSY HERITAGE

EXACTLY. HE ENJOYS SOME MINOR BLOOD TIES TO OUR CLAN -- AND BECAUSE OF THAT, KNOWS THAT WE ARE *LEGENDARY* FOR OUR *HEALING SKILLS*

ALL OF WHICH HIS *CONDITION* TAXED TO THEIR *FULLEST*

SO IN A SENSE HE'S ONE OF YOU AND YET, YOU WELCOME *ME*

WAS ONE OF US. HIS ABUSIVE PERSONALITY QUICKLY MADE HIM QUITE THE *PARIAH*

WHATEVER INJURIES DROVE HIM TO US IN THE *FIRST* PLACE MR. ARCHARD, D.D. MORE THAN SCAR HIS *BODY* THEY SCARRED HIS *MIND*. LIGHTBOURNE IS *QUITE* MAD. HE IS OBSESSED WITH *TWO THINGS*. YOU--

--AND SOMETHING HE CALLED. WHAT WAS IT? OH, YES --

-THE *ENIGMATIC PRISM*

'THE *ENIGMATIC PRISM* SIMON, WHAT DOES THAT *MEAN*?

SIMON?

SIMON ?

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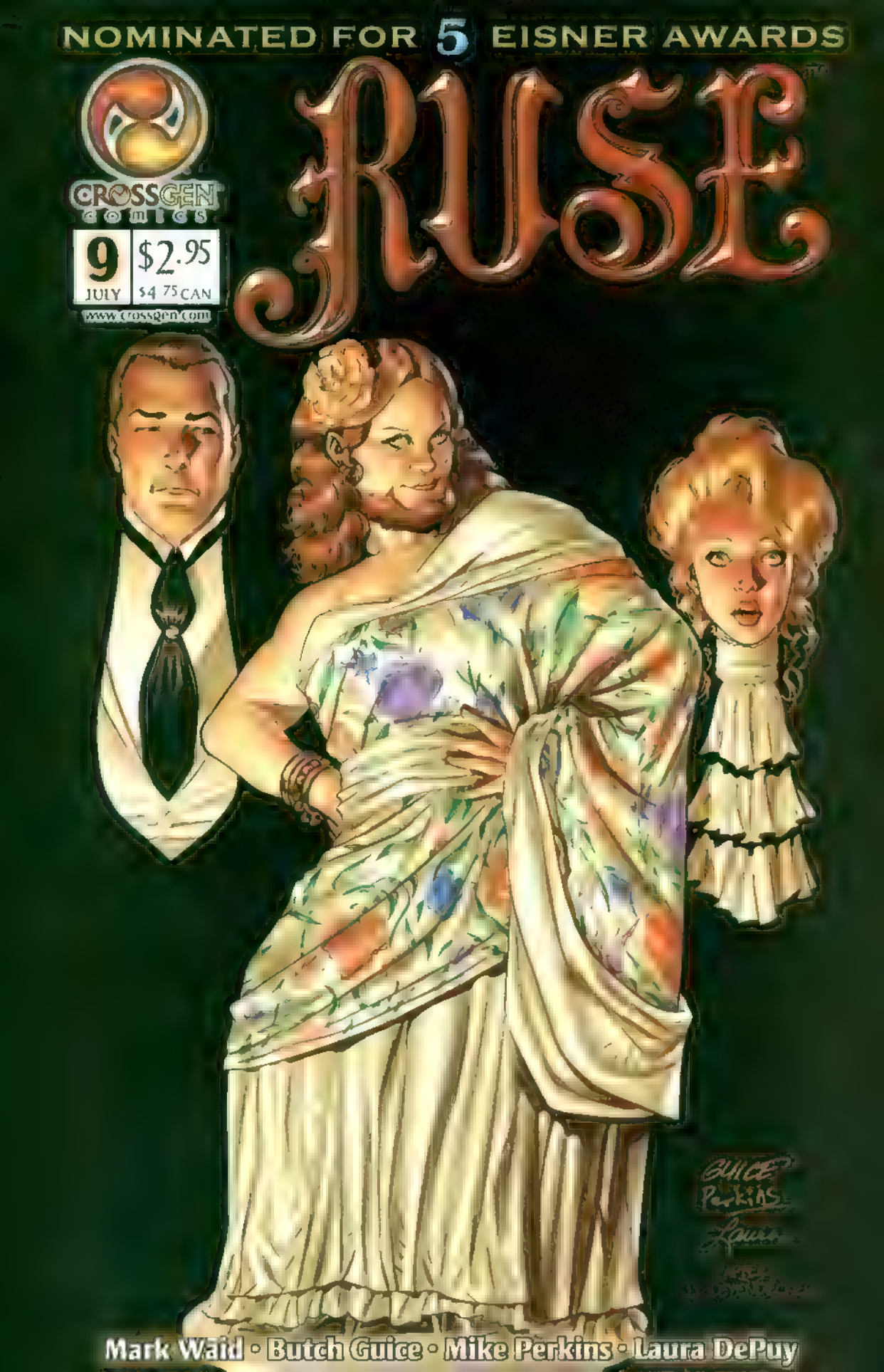

The PENNY ARCADIAN

Copiously Illustrated — Afternoon Edition, Price One Penny

CRIME RATE PLUMMETS

OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

THE CITY'S FAVORITE SON.
HIS MIND IS RAZOR-SHARP

EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY,
HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE

A CUNNING CRIMESMITH
WITH COUNTENANCE UNREVEALED

ARCHARD SETS THE PACE

BLUDGERS AND HOODLUMS QUAKE FEARFULLY

Following a brief excursion to the East Country, detective Simon Archard returned last week to his Partington headquarters freshly spirited. Attacking with vigor every crime committed and mystery unveiled in his absence, within hours Archard had recovered the Merriwell jewelry collection, brought to justice the perpetrator of the Humbert murder, and solved the incomprehensible Riddle of the Turnabout Crypt.

With stamina undaunted, Archard then set to the task of gathering evidence against the long-ensconced Worthers Mob, foulest scourge of the city. Working tirelessly for some thirty-six hours with no respite, Archard shattered the network of this nefarious crime syndicate without so much as leaving his armchair, sending the mob deep into seclusion.

Close observers, however, are baffled that Archard's newfound intensity and groundbreaking detections seem wholly unrelated to the reappearance of Archard's former partner, Malcolm Lightbourne. All available information suggests that Lightbourne, having escaped

"NO REST FOR THE WICKED,"
CLAIMS DETECTIVE SIMON ARCHARD

pursuit following the attempted murder of Archard's assistant, Emma Bishop, is still at large and still a threat to the citizens of the city. While Archard's motives are, as always, known only to himself, it is with no small curiosity as to why Partington's favorite son has yet to focus his efforts on Lightbourne's capture

•••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

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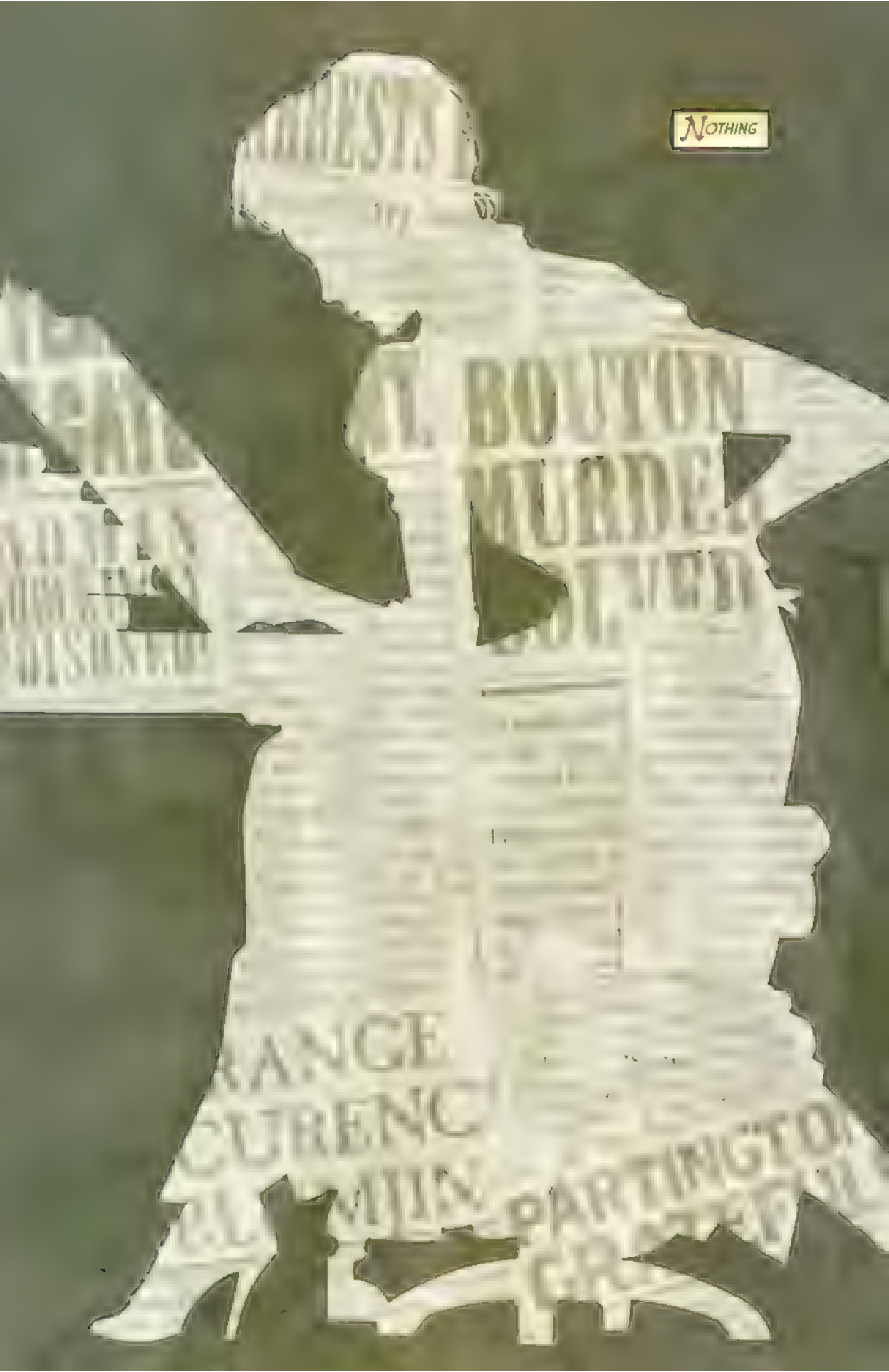
NOTHING

FOR WEEKS NOW, I'VE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO INVEIGLE FROM SIMON INFORMATION AS TO HIS PAST

SPECIFICALLY, HIS PAST PARTNER --A MADMAN BY THE NAME OF MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE, WHO WAS PRESUMED DEAD FOR MANY YEARS--

--A FALSE ASSUMPTION GIVEN THAT HE NEARLY DROWNED SIMON, SWUNG AT ME REPEATEDLY WITH AN AXE, AND IS CURRENTLY AT LARGE

AS USUAL, HOWEVER, SIMON IS ABOUT AS FORTHCOMING AS A NUN AT A ROULETTE WHEEL

WHICH IS WHY I'VE BEEN IN HERE FOR THREE DAYS. SIMON OWNS PROBABLY THE SINGLE GREATEST LIBRARY COLLECTION IN THE WORLD, AND AMONG ITS REFERENCE WORKS ARE DECADES' WORTH OF BOUND NEWSPAPER VOLUMES

...SORTED, ONE WOULD HAVE TO ASSUME, BY COLOR

THUS MY HUNT FOR ARTICLES REGARDING THE LIGHTBOURNE-ARCHARD TEAM IS MADDENINGLY RANDOM ..

THOUGH NEVER DULL

THE INCONCEIVABLE EXPLAINED

Lightbourne, Archard Solve Grisly "Murder In A Bottle" Afair

STILL, WHILE THERE'S MUCH WRITTEN ABOUT THEIR CASES, THERE'S NOTHING ON LIGHTBOURNE THE MAN

Mmmh

BONES ARE CREAKING, I'VE BEEN AT THIS SO LONG AND STILL NO

OH-HO WHAT'S THIS?

OH

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE ON THE HUMBERT MURDER

SIMON! I DIDN'T HEAR YOU--

WAIT

I WASN'T HELPING WITH THAT, I WAS HERE

YOU DON'T SAY

Ah, HOW CONVENIENTLY WE IGNORE THAT YOU'VE BEEN SO ON THE MOVE THAT YOUR PARTNER

ASSISTANT

-PARTNER CAN'T FIND YOU, MUCH LESS AID YOU

SPEAKING OF FINDING THOSE ARE THE MORGUE FILES, YES?

OBITUARIES BY THE HUNDRED. DO YOU REALLY KEEP A RECORD OF EVERY SINGLE DEATH IN PARTINGTON?

A TOOL OF THE TRADE AND WE CAN ADD A NEW CLIPPING

ONE OF OUR AGENTS A STABLEBOY AT THE OXFORD-COLLINS ESTATE JUST TELEPHONED WITH SOME VERY MUNDANE REPORTAGE REGARDING AN UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT

JOIN ME

BUT IF IT'S THAT MUNDANE, THEN WHY

VERY WELL

WHY INDEED?

WHY HAVE WE COMPLETELY ABANDONED THE HUNT FOR LIGHTBOURNE?

THE MANSION AND SURROUNDING ACREAGE BELONGING TO **LIONEL OXFORD-COLLINS** TOGETHER CONSTITUTE THE SINGLE LARGEST PRIVATELY-HELD AREA OF LAND IN PARTINGTON

IT TAKES LONGER TO WALK AROUND THE SOUTH SIDE THAN IT DID TO HANSOM HERE FROM SIMON'S HEADQUARTERS

QUITE THE ***STROLL***. I WISH YOU'D WARNED ME TO PACK A ***LUNCH***

IT'S DIFFICULT TO DECIDE WHICH IS MORE MELLIFLUOUS TO THE EAR

YOUR DRONING COMPLAINTS THAT I LEAVE YOU ***BEHIND*** OR YOUR DRONING COMPLAINTS THAT I TAKE YOU ***ALONG***

YET I ***DO*** ADMIRE THE ***SCENERY***

YOU'RE NOT ALONE. THE ***CHURCH OF THE DRYADINE*** - NOTED WORSHIPPERS OF NATURE AND FAUNA -- MAKES ITS HOME ON THE GROUNDS IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT

THEY'VE COUNTED OXFORD COLLINS AS A MEMBER OF THEIR FAITH FOR ***YEARS*** YEARS IN WHICH, I'M TOLD, THEY'VE BEEN TRYING TO COAX THEIR WAY INTO THE MAN'S ***WILL***

THAT'S AN ODD THING TO BRING ***UP***, SIMON

ODD, BUT ***TIMELY***

OH, MY

CONVEY MY ***CONDOLENCES***, GIRLS. IF ONLY WE'D BEEN RIDING ***WITH*** HIM WHEN HE --

ARCHARD? WHAT ARE ***YOU*** DOING HERE?

WE'LL SEE

AH, GARFIELD BIGGS. THE ***LAWYERLY STENCH*** GIVES HIM AWAY

AN UNREPENTANT CHAUVINIST WHO CAN'T ABIDE SEEING A WOMAN UNCHAINED FROM HER STOVE HE'S SOILED OUR PATH BEFORE

WELL, YOU'RE NOT ***WELCOME*** HERE, GOOD SIR. THERE'S NO TAWDRY ***CRIME*** FOR YOU TO SCRUTINIZE, NO ***BLOOD*** IN WHICH TO BATHE YOUR ***HANDS***

THIS CAN'T BE ***HAPPENING***, DOCTOR, ***PLEASE***!

I DID ALL I COULD FOR YOUR FATHER, GIRLS

BUT HE'S ***GONE***

FOR A MOMENT, I THOUGHT HE COULD

BUT NO. DAMNED TICKER JUST GAVE OUT

HEART ATTACK? WERE THERE ANY ***WITNE***--

--I MEAN WAS THERE ANYONE WITH HIM AT THE TIME?

ALL OF ***US***. EVERY FEW MONTHS, LIONEL ASSEMBLED HIS FRIENDS AND FAMILY AND UNLEASHED THE HOUNDS FOR A ***GARGOYLE HUNT***

THE BLAST OF LIONEL'S BUGLE SCATTERED US THROUGH THE WOODS IN TWOS AND THREES ON A MERRY CHASE

YOU'D BE SURPRISED AT HOW *STRENUOUS* RIDING CAN BE JUST BECAUSE THE *HORSE* DOES MOST OF THE WORK DOESN'T MEAN YOUR MUSCLES WON'T *ACHE* AFTERWARDS.

"POOR LIONEL

THE EXERTION WAS TOO MUCH FOR HIM

BY THE TIME HE'D HIT THE GROUND, HE WAS ALREADY GREY AS THE *GRAVE*, EACH BREATH MORE SHALLOW THAN THE LAST

THOSE OF US CLOSEST TO HIM CARRIED HIM BACK TO THE HOUSE *IMMEDIATELY* BUT *IMMEDIATELY* WASN'T FAST *ENOUGH*

AS BIGGS FINISHES HIS TALE, SOMEONE *NEW* SPEAKS, AND I CAN TELL JUST BY LOOKING AT HER THAT SHE'S A *POETIC SOUL*

THE ILLS THAT FLESH IS HEIR TO

FAREWELL, KIND SIR MAY GOD'S SOIL BLESS AND KEEP YOU

AND MAY THE LEAVES AND THE FERNS AND THE FLOWERS LONG IN STEM WATCH AND PROTECT YOU AS THE SEASONS COME AND GO

AN ANNOYINGLY POETIC SOUL

YRONDYNE HIGH PRIESTESS OF THE DRYADINE SECT

SHE DOESN'T EXACTLY REEK OF *SINCERITY* AM I THE ONLY ONE WITH THAT IMPRESSION?

NO !

OH, SAVE THE *CROCODILE TEARS*, YOU TREE-STROKING *FREAK* THEY'RE A *WASTE*

FATHER MAY HAVE BOUGHT INTO YOUR ARCANE CLAPTRAP *WE*, ON THE OTHER HAND, WANT YOU AWAY FROM *HIM* AND OFF *OUR LAND NOW*

YOUR LAND THE TINY *ACORNS* CLAIM TO KNOW HOW LEANED THE *OAK* HOW *JOCUND*

HOW *DARE* YOU LAY CLAIM TO WHAT'S *RIGHTFULLY OURS*, YOU FILTHY *HAG?*

THIS LAND IS TO BE SHARED WITH *BELIEVERS*, YOU INSOLENT *CHILD*

DELIGHTFUL

IF YOU'RE GOING TO BICKER OVER *INHERITANCE*, CAN YOU AT LEAST GET THE POOR MAN INTO A *GRAVE* SO HE CAN *ROLL OVER* PROPERLY?

THAT VOICE

WHEN I DIE, I HOPE *MY* MOURNING PERIOD LASTS MORE THAN *NINE SECONDS*

I KNOW THAT VOICE !

OH GOOD GOD

NOT LONG AGO, ONE OF SIMON'S AGENTS WAS KILLED DURING AN INVESTIGATION. HIS NAME WAS OTTO PRESSMONK

OTTO WAS THE ONE PERSON SIMON COULD STAND NEXT TO IF HE WISHED TO LOOK LOVABLE BY COMPARISON

I ALWAYS FEARED OTTO WOULD HAUNT ME FROM BEYOND

BUT NOT IN CHIFFON

I DIDN'T KNOW THE CIRCUS WAS IN TOWN

WE ROLLED THROUGH YESTERDAY HELLO, SIMON

EMMA, MEET OPHELIA PRESSMONK, OTTO'S TWIN

TWIN WHAT?

AH, YOU MUST BE EMMA BISHOP

EVERY TIME OTTO AND I VISITED THE SNAKES AT THE ZOO, HE MENTIONED YOU

YOU'RE NOT REAL

THIS IS A VERY ELABORATE MONKEY YOU'VE TRAINED HERE SIMON. WELL DONE

PFFFFL

TOO TALL FOR A LOOP TO REACH HER BRAIN. POOR THING

YES, DARLING, OUR MERRY CARAVAN ONCE MORE TRUNDLES INTO PARTINGTON

VASHTI SENDS HIS BEST, BY THE WAY

AND YOU'RE WITH US NOW BECAUSE..?

SAME REASON AS YESTERDAY TO BARGAIN

ON BEHALF OF THE CIRCUS, I APPROACHED MR. OXFORD-COLLINS ABOUT OUR SETTING UP ON THE NORTH-EAST CORNER OF HIS ESTATE--

--ONLY TO HAVE HIS "LOVING" DAUGHTERS REBUFF ME

AND WE SHALL AGAIN

IF YOU'VE THE RIGHT

AND THE LAND WAR CONTINUES. BIGGS, WHERE DID OXFORD COLLINS KEEP AN OFFICE?

FIRST FLOOR, SOUTH WING. WE MET THERE FREQUENTLY. WHY?

YOU, YOU, AND YOU-- STAY WITH THE BODY UNTIL THE CORONER ARRIVES. THE REST OF YOU, FOLLOW ME.

TO WHERE?

AH, SIMON. SUCH A WAY WITH PEOPLE YOU HAVE

SIMON?

SIMON?

IT OCCURS TO ME THAT, GIVEN ALL THE *SQUABBLING* ABOUT WHO INHERITS *WHAT*

AN EXAMINATION OF OXFORD-COLLINS *LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT* MIGHT BE IN ORDER

MR. BIGGS. CAN YOU VERIFY THAT THIS OFFICE IS WHERE HE WOULD HAVE KEPT SUCH AN IMPORTANT DOCUMENT?

YES

THEN WE HAVE A *PROBLEM*

EVIDENTLY, SOMEONE BEAT US *TO* IT

WHAT? BUT *WHY?*

ISN'T IT *OBVIOUS?* BIGGS, YOU MUST HAVE A *COPY* OF THE WILL

ON FILE, YES

SO WE *HOPE*

TELEPHONE YOUR OFFICE IMMEDIATELY ENQUIRE AS TO ITS SAFETY TELL YOUR SECRETARY YOU WISH HER TO MAKE *CERTAIN* IT IS *IN HAND*

WHAT A FINE TURN OF *EVENTS*. WHOEVER RANSACKED THE ROOM TURNED IT *UPSIDE-DOWN* IN SEARCH OF ITS SAFE

WHO CAN ACCOUNT FOR THEIR WHEREABOUTS?

WHAT? IS ANYONE *HURT?*

MISS YRONDYNE, WHERE WERE YOU EARLIER THIS AFTER NOON?

WHERE I AM EVERY DAY ENGAGED IN PRIVATE *MEDITATION* AMIDST THE SYCAMORE GROVE NORTH OF THE *CHURCH*

MAKE HER *PROVE* IT AND DON'T LOOK AT *US*

WE WERE ON THE *HUNT*

AND YET, OFF ON YOUR *OWN* I DON'T RECALL *SEEING* THE GIRLS THROUGHOUT MOST OF IT OF COURSE THEY COULD SAY THE SAME ABOUT *ME*

SIMON, MY OFFICE HAS BEEN VANDALIZED AS WELL LIONEL'S FILES ARE *GONE*

YOU WERE HIS LAWYER DO YOU KNOW THE SPECIFIC *DETAILS* OF HIS WILL?

AS PER LIONEL'S REQUEST, *NO*. HE WAS A *VERY* PRIVATE MAN

I *CAN*, NEVERTHELESS, STATE WITH SOME CERTAINTY THAT THE ESTATE *EN TOTO* WAS LEFT *EITHER* TO THE DRYADINE CHURCH *OR* TO HIS DAUGHTERS BESS AND MARY BUT *NOT* BOTH

THIS LAND HAS BEEN IN LIONEL'S FAMILY FOR THREE CENTURIES HE WAS ALWAYS ADAMANT THAT HE'D NEVER SPLIT IT UP

BUT WHO *PROPERLY* INHERITS IT BECOMES A MATTER FOR *PROBATE COURT* SHOULD THE CHURCH CHALLENGE THE *GIRLS*

AND WHY *SHOULDN'T* IT? DO YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW *DISAPPOINTED* LIONEL WAS IN THESE ESURIENT LITTLE *HARRIDANS* HE SIRED?

HOW *CONVINCED* HE WAS THAT THEY'D *SELL* THIS LAND TO SOULLESS DEVELOPERS WITHOUT A *MOMENT'S REGRET* SHOULD THEY BE ALLOWED THE *OPPORTUNITY*?

PLAINLY, *THEY* TURNED THIS OFFICE UPSIDE-DOWN!

WHY? WE *KNEW* WHERE THE *SAFE* WAS, UNLIKE *YOU*, YOU FATUOUS--

MR ARCHARD, *ARREST* THIS WOMAN! SHE'S *GUILTY! GUILTY!* TAKE HER *AWAY!*

IN THE *FIRST* PLACE, THAT ISN'T WHAT I *DO*

AND IN THE *SECOND* PLACE

...I'M NOT INTERESTED IN *ANY* ACTIVITY THAT REQUIRES ENDURING ANOTHER *INSTANT* WITH *ANYONE* IN THAT ROOM

YOU TOOK THE WORDS RIGHT OUT OF MY *MOUTH*, DARLING

WRETCHED CREATURES, THE *LOT* OF THEM

SAID THE *POT* OF THE *KETTLE*

CONTAINER HUMOR FROM THE *BOTTLE BLONDE* COLOR ME *UNAMUSED*.

SEND HER *ALONG*, SIMON THAT WAY, YOU AND I CAN PUT OUR *HEADS* TOGETHER.

ABOUT THE MISSING *WILL*?

WELL, THERE'S THAT, *TOO*. I, IN FACT, HAVE A *THEORY* OR TWO

REALLY? WHAT A COINCIDENCE! SO DO I! WHY *WIGGLE*? I CAN *BARELY* KEEP IT IN MY GIRLISHLY TINY *NOGGIN*, BUT I *DO* HAVE A *THEORY* OF MY *VERY OWN* THAT I THOUGHT UP *ALL BY MYSELF!*

DO SHARE

YOU'RE A *PAIN*

FUMPH

WHY, YOU...! COME *BACK HERE!*

ODD! I COULD SWEAR SOMETHING *UNDERFOOT* IS MAKING A NETTLESOME *SQUEAKING NOISE*

PITY I CAN'T *HEAR* IT ALL THE WAY UP HERE

LA LA LA LA LA!

ARE YOU *SURE*?

IT'S *NOT* OPHELIA

ARE YOU *SURE*?

IT'S *NOT* OPHELIA

ARE YOU *SURE*?

IT'S. NOT. *OPHELIA*

HOW CAN YOU BE SO CERTAIN

BECAUSE I'VE KNOWN HER FOR *YEARS*

BECAUSE SHE HAS NO *MOTIVE*.

BECAUSE SHE CAN'T REACH THE *SAFE*

CHOOSE ONE

FINE. I'D ASK *HOW* YOU KNOW HER, BUT YOU WOULDN'T TELL ME. I'D ASK IF YOU YET KNOW WHO STOLE THE *WILL*, BUT YOU WON'T TELL ME THAT, *EITHER*

SIMON, ALL REPARTEE ASIDE, YOU'RE GROWING *MORE* SECRETIVE AND *LESS* TRUSTING. IT'S *NOT* MY IMAGINATION. WHAT'S COME *BETWEEN* US?

ALL RIGHT. IT GOES BACK TO OUR ESCAPE FROM THAT SINKING *CARGO SHIP*

DURING THE *MIRANDA CROSS* CASE.

WHEN WE RETURNED *HERE*, I FOUND A SINGLE STRAND OF LONG BLACK *HAIR* INSIDE MY COAT--

--UNTOUCHED BY THE *WATER*

CURIOUS, I MOUNTED IT ON A MICROSCOPE SLIDE

BLACK HAIR MIRANDA BUT I CAN'T TELL SIMON SHE WAS THERE WITHOUT SAYING TOO MUCH

WHY WOULD YOU ASK ME?

BECAUSE, DURING MY ABSENCE *FOLLOWING* THAT CASE--

AN ABSENCE IN WHICH YOU WERE THE ONLY PERSON WITH ACCESS TO THIS LAB

--THE HAIR WAS *DESTROYED*

IS THERE SOMETHING YOU WISH TO *TELL* ME?

FAR MORE THAN IS GOOD FOR YOU

YOU'RE *ACCUSING* ME OF ?

SIMON ARCHARD, I HAVE *NO IDEA* WHAT BECAME OF YOUR *PRECIOUS EVIDENCE* ON THAT. YOU HAVE MY *WORD*.

I'LL BE *DOWNSTAIRS* WHILE YOU DECIDE HOW YOU WISH TO *APOLOGIZE*

THAT WENT POORLY

I SHOULDN'T HAVE LET MY TEMPER GET THE BETTER OF ME. I SHOULD HAVE BEEN *KINDER* WITH SIMON

.. BECAUSE HE'S NOT *HIMSELF*. I'VE FINALLY GUESSED THE TRUTH ABOUT WHY HE'S AVOIDING THE MORE *PRESSING* CASE AT HAND

IT'S UNFATHOMABLE... IT'S IN EVERY WAY UNLIKE SIMON.. BUT IT'S THE ONLY THEORY THAT MAKES SENSE

COME TO ANY NEW OBSERVATIONS ABOUT *LIGHTBOURNE*?

YES

YOU'RE *AFRAID* OF HIM

I *SAW* HOW YOU REACTED WHEN THE GYPSIES SPOKE OF HIM, SIMON

AND I *REMEMBER* HOW EMOTIONAL YOU BECAME BEFORE *THAT*, WHEN LIGHTBOURNE FIRST *ATTACKED*

HE WAS YOUR FIRST *PARTNER*, SIMON, AND I SUSPECT HE WAS QUITE THE *MENTOR*, AS WELL

THAT EXPLAINS THE *COMPETITIVE STREAK* HE STIRS IN YOU

HE KNOWS HOW TO *GOAD* YOU, HOW TO *MANIPULATE* YOU

YOU, OF *ALL* PEOPLE, MUST FIND THAT *TERRIFYING*

BUT YOU HAVE TO PUT THAT FEAR *ASIDE*, SIMON, AND I'LL *HELP* YOU. HOWEVER I *CAN*. I *MEAN* IT. YOU DON'T--

HERE.

--YOU DON'T *HAVE* TO BE *AFRAID* OF--

GOOD LORD

IT'S I WHO MUST APOLOGIZE, THIS.

THEN YOU GRASP ITS SIGNIFICANCE.

I'M BEGINNING TO WHY DIDN'T YOU BRING THIS UP BEFORE?

I HAD TO FIGURE OUT THE *WHY* OF IT FIRST AND NOW THAT I *HAVE*--

THE *WHO* OF IT IS PAINFULLY *APPARENT*

SO YOU SAY YOU KNOW WHO PINCHED LIONEL'S *WILL*, SIMON?

OF *COURSE* HE DOES! WHY *ELSE* ASSEMBLE THE *DRAMATIS PERSONAE* AT THE SCENE OF THE *CRIME*?

WHAT A FLAIR FOR *THEATRICS* YOU HAVE, MR ARCHARD

EXTRA POINTS FOR THE *THUNDERSTORM*

THANK YOU. I FIND IT'S THOSE EXTRA *TOUCHES* THAT SET THE STAGE SO *BEAUTIFULLY* WHEN ONE DISCUSSES *MURDER*

M-*MURDER*? BUT LIONEL WASN'T--

HE MOST CERTAINLY *WAS THIS*, I'VE KNOWN FROM THE *START*. AND HIS *HUNTSMAN'S BUGLE* WAS THE *WEAPON*

A QUICK SWAB OF ITS MOUTHPIECE EVINCED A SLOW ACTING NICOTINE DERIVATIVE *POISON*--

ITS EFFECTS INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM A COMMON *CORONARY*.

HOW PERFECTLY *GHASTLY!* WHO WOULD HAVE ?

ANY OF YOU, FRANKLY. I'M QUITE CONFIDENT THE BUGLE WASN'T HARD TO *GET* AT. MOREOVER, NO ONE OFFERS A CLEAR ALIBI FOR *ANYTHING*, AND WITH THE *INHERITANCE* AT STAKE, MOTIVES *ABOUND* INCLUDING *YOURS*, BIGGS

MINE? YOU'RE *MAD*! WHAT *POSSIBLE* REASON COULD I HAVE FOR MURDERING LIONEL?

YOU SAID IT *YOURSELF*, WITH THE WILL *MISSING*, THE OXFORD-COLLINS *DAUGHTERS* COULD SPEND *YEARS*. *EXPENSIVE* YEARS. IN COURT AS YOU DEFEND THEIR *CLAIM*

THAT'S *ABSURD*! DON'T KEEP US IN *SUSPENSE*, MAN! IF THE *THIEF* IS ALSO A *KILLER*--

PATIENCE, BIGGS. I REMIND YOU AGAIN WHEN EMMA SPARKED DISCUSSION NO ONE COULD PROVIDE HIMSELF A REASONABLE ALIBI FOR THE TIME OF THE THEFT

THAT

--WAS *MY* JOB. NOTE THE *WINDOW PANE* CRACKED DURING THE BURGLARY

WHEN EMMA AND I FIRST ARRIVED, WE CIRCUMNAVIGATED THE SOUTH WING--THIS WING, AT WHICH TIME THE WINDOWS WERE IN *PERFECT REPAIR*

THE BROKEN GLASS SET THE THEFT *DURING THE PERIOD WE WERE ALL OUT BACK TOGETHER*

WELL *OBSERVED*, MR. ARCHARD AND *THANK* YOU. AT LEAST THAT CLEARS US

OF *WHAT*?

EXCUSE ME ?

I NEVER SAID THE MURDERER AND THE THIEF WERE ONE AND THE SAME. *BIGGS* DID, AND WE *ALL* KNOW HOW OFTEN A *LAWYER* SPEAKS THE TRUTH

THE IDENTITY OF THE *KILLER* IS NO MYSTERY AT *ALL*. AS A MATTER OF *FACT*, I KNEW *PRECISELY* WHO WAS GUILTY THE MOMENT I WAS *NOTIFIED* OF OXFORD-COLLINS' *FATE*, BEFORE I EVEN LEFT MY *HEADQUARTERS*.

PENNY ARCA

Afternoon Edition, Price

MacGRUDER KILLER FO

VICTIM'S CHILDREN WERE MASTERMINDS

MEMORIES ARE *SHORT* WHILE *SOMEONE* WOULD EVENTUALLY HAVE MADE THE CONNECTION, I RECALLED IT *INSTANTLY* AS WAS THE MACABRE *INTENT* OF THE CRIME'S SECRET *ENGINEER*

TWELVE YEARS AGO, PARTINGTON SAW A MURDER ALMOST *IDENTICAL*--RIGHT DOWN TO THE *VERY LAST DETAIL*

I REMEMBER THIS *VIVIDLY*

CITY SLEUTHS CLAIM REWARD

--BECAUSE IT WAS THE *VERY FIRST CASE* THE *LIGHTBOURNE-ARCHARD* TEAM *EVER SOLVED*

HE NEVER *TOLD* YOU THAT YOU WERE PAWNS N A *LARGER SCHEME*, DID HE, GIRLS?

WE WE DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU RE *TALKING* ABOUT..!

SPARE ME

LIGHTBOURNE S BEHIND IT *ALL* HE SOUGHT YOU *OUT* A CHARMING *STRANGER* WITH A *PLAN*, AWARE OF YOUR *GREED*

HE *PROPOSED* THE MURDER AND NSTRUCTED YOU IN THE *MECHANICS*

AFTERWARD, WHILE WE WERE GATHERED *HE* STOLE THE *WILL*

--PILLAGING THE ROOM NO DOUBT, TO COVER THE FACT THAT YOU D *TOLD* HIM EXACTLY WHERE .T *WAS*

TOGETHER YOU

WHUNF

KAFF

MARY. *RUN!* RUN!

I'VE BEEN *MEANING* TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT THIS DESPITE YOUR *MANY* BRILLIANT TALENTS YOU *DO* HAVE *ONE GLARING FLAW*

YOU'RE *CONVINCED* THAT THE ACCUSED WILL IN THE FACE OF YOUR *GENIUS*, FALL AND *PROSTRATE* THEMSELVES AND BEG *FORGIVENESS*.

YOU *MIGHT* WISH TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THAT, MORE OFTEN, THEY *FLEE*

NOW WHO HAS ISSUES OF TRUST?

OPHELIA, TAKE THE *KEY* AND *MEET* US THE MATTER OF WHICH WE SPOKE *BEFOREHAND*?

ATTENDED TO

AS THEY L SOON *LEARN*

QUICKLY! TO THE *STABLES!* WE CAN MAKE OUR ESCAPE BY *HORSEBACK!*

Oh TO *BE* THERE

BESS THE *DOORS*..!

I *SEE!* SHUT *UP* AND LET ME *THINK!*

GASP

NO! BESS, HE S *COMING!* HE KNOWS WHERE WE *ARE!*

WERE HE KNOWS WHERE WE *WERE*

THIS WAY!

GOD, I CAN BARELY *SEE*

I CAN SEE *ENOUGH!* UP *THERE!*

POLICE CLOSING IN *DAMN* YOU, ARCHARD

BESS, WHAT'LL WE *DO?* LIGHTBOURNE WILL *KILL* US IF WE'RE CAUGHT! *HE'LL* **KILL US!**

SHUT UP! GET TO THE *LAKE!*

Oh! Oh, I SEE! THE SUMMER *ROWBOAT!*

EXACTLY

I'M NOT SO *STUPID* AS TO LEAVE OURSELVES ONLY ONE *EXIT!*

HOW LONG BEFORE THEY TAKE *NOTE?*

OF THE *HOLE* IN THE BOTTOM? I'D SAY JUST ABOUT *NOW*

BESS, WE'RE *SINKING!*

SHUT *UP!* SHUT UP, SHUT UP, **SHUT UP!**

WELL *PLAYED*

CHESS WITH *HALF WITS*

SO LIGHTBOURNE SET THIS WHOLE AFFAIR IN MOTION SIMPLY TO *TAUNT* YOU?

NO

THERE'S MORE *TO* THIS LADIES! *WHAT'S LIGHTBOURNE HIDING ON THE ESTATE?*

TELL ME!

WE'LL *APPEASE* HIM! WE'LL *NEVER--*

YOU SHUT UP, BESS! IT'S *OVER!*

AS--AS PART OF OUR *DEAL*, HE *TOLD* US TO *KEEP* THE *CIRCUS* PEOPLE AWAY AT *ALL COSTS*-- BUT HE *WOULDN'T* SAY *WHY!*

HE PROMISED IF WE PLAYED *ALONG*, WE'D GET THE INHERITANCE *PLUS* PAYMENT FROM *HIM!* AND THAT'S *ALL WE KNOW*-- **I SWEAR!**

PROBABLY *SO* IF ANYTHING *ELSE* COMES TO MIND, TELL IT TO THE *POLICE*

WHAT'S LIGHTBOURNE HIDING?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY *THAT?*

IT'S *OBVIOUS*

THOUGH I ADMIT OPHELIA'S *PRESENCE* MADE IT *CLEARER* TO ME

ONE FRESH STEED, BRIDLED AS *ORDERED* THERE'S ROOM FOR ONE AND A *HALF*

NO THANK YOU, OPHELIA. I'LL RIDE *ALONE*

OPHELIA'S *CIRCUSFOLK* WISHED ACCESS TO THE PROPERTY'S *NORTHEAST CORNER*

LIGHTBOURNE HAD THE SISTERS CHASE THEM AWAY FOR THE SAME REASON HE MUDDLED THE LAND'S OWNERSHIP BY STEALING THE *WILL--*

--BECAUSE THERE'S SOMETHING *HERE*, LIKELY IN THE NORTH-EAST CORNER. HE WISHES TO ENSURE NO ONE *FINDS!* BUT *WHAT?*

I'LL KNOW *SOON* THERE ARE *CAVES* THERE. I HAVE MY *SUSPICIONS*

HYAH!

SIMON, *WAIT!*

WASTED WORDS. HE WAS ALREADY GONE

I'D BEEN PROFOUNDLY MISTAKEN
SIMON HADN'T BEEN IGNORING LIGHTBOURNE AT ALL. FAR FROM IT
IT'S BEEN ABOUT LIGHTBOURNE ALL ALONG
SIMON KNEW FROM THE START THAT THE TWO OF THEM WERE ENMESHED IN A MORBID AND JEOPARDOUS GAME
AND THAT LIGHTBOURNE DETERMINED THE PLAYING FIELD.
HELLO SIMON!

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The PENNY ARCADIAN

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DEATH IN DUPLICATE

WEALTHY LANDOWNER POISONED BY DAUGHTERS

SLAIN VICTIM OXFORD-COLLINS

KILLING IDENTICAL TO ONE TWELVE YEARS EARLIER

Forever redefining the strange in our city most fair, detective Simon Archard's investigation regarding yesterday's slaying of millionaire Mr. Wickston Oxford-Collins has yielded a circumstance unique in the annals of crimedom. According to authorities, the elaborately-staged murder was, by design, identical in every meaningful detail to one committed more than a decade previous.

The *Arcadian's* own research proves that the Oxford-Collins murder indeed closely parallels the case of Mr. Carter Langenham, a slaying famous not for its victim but for its victor. As astute readers shall recall, the Langenham case was the first ever solved by then-neophyte Simon Archard, aided by his mentor-later-partner Malcolm Lightbourne

Authorities are perplexed as to the import of the similitude between the two murders. Those close to the scene claim Lightbourne, believed deceased, masterminded the Oxford-Collins death. If so, it is theorized that Lightbourne's motive may have been simply to send some sort of taunt or message to his former partner. While the *Arcadian* is not yet privy to the significance of •••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

THE CITY'S FAVORITE SON, HIS MIND IS RAZOR-SHARP

EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY, HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE

A CUNNING CRIMESMITH WITH COUNTENANCE UNREVEALED

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

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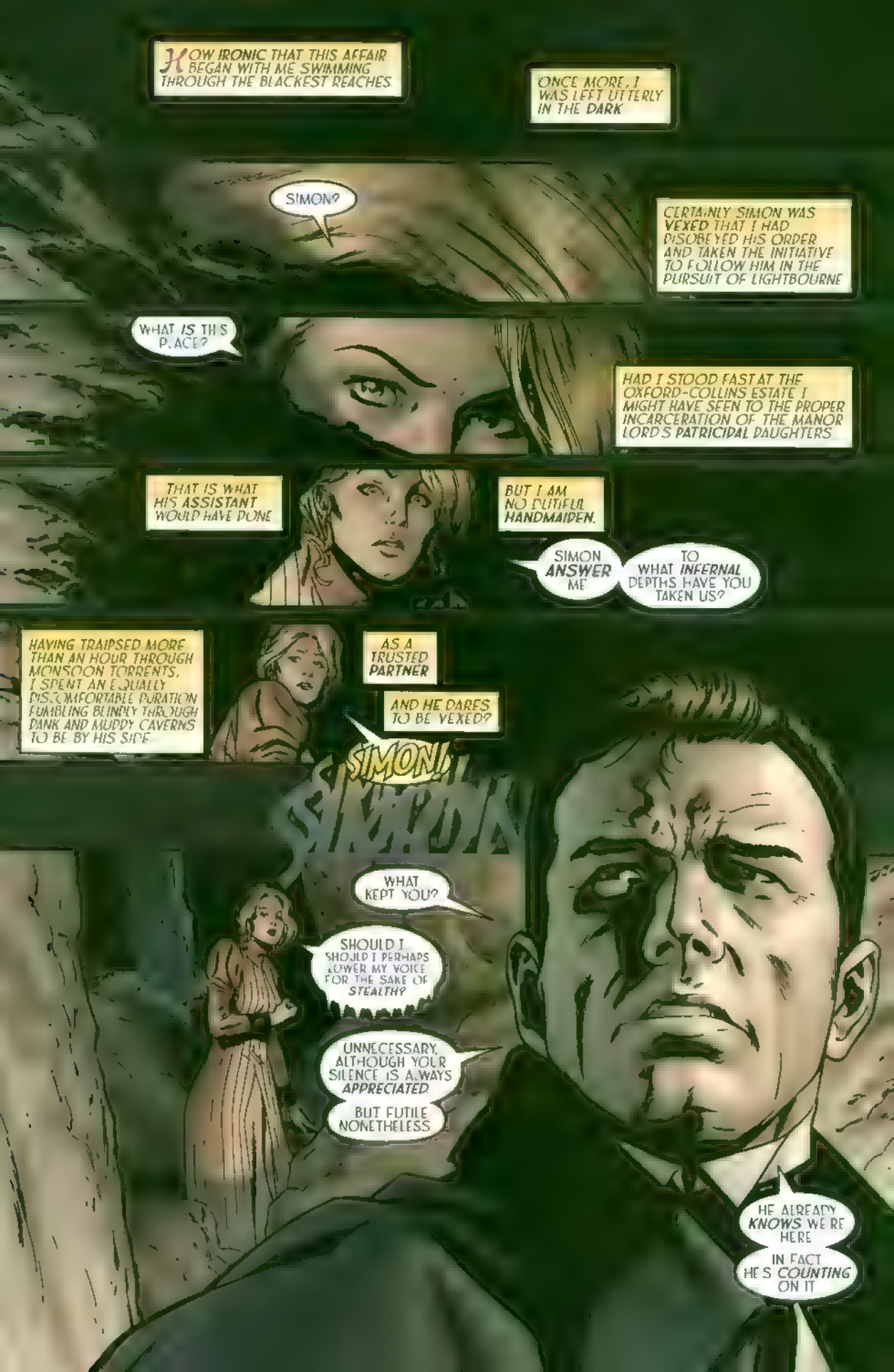
HOW IRONIC THAT THIS AFFAIR BEGAN WITH ME SWIMMING THROUGH THE BLACKEST REACHES
ONCE MORE, I WAS LEFT UTTERLY IN THE DARK
SIMON?
CERTAINLY SIMON WAS VEXED THAT I HAD DISOBEYED HIS ORDER AND TAKEN THE INITIATIVE TO FOLLOW HIM IN THE PURSUIT OF LIGHTBOURNE
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
HAD I STOOD FAST AT THE OXFORD-COLLINS ESTATE I MIGHT HAVE SEEN TO THE PROPER INCARCERATION OF THE MANOR LORD'S PATRICIDAL DAUGHTERS
THAT IS WHAT HIS ASSISTANT WOULD HAVE DONE
BUT I AM NO DUTIFUL HANDMAIDEN.
SIMON ANSWER ME
TO WHAT INFERNAL DEPTHS HAVE YOU TAKEN US?
HAVING TRAIPSED MORE THAN AN HOUR THROUGH MONSOON TORRENTS, I SPENT AN EQUALLY DISCOMFORTABLE DURATION FUMBLING BLINDLY THROUGH DANK AND MUDDY CAVERNS TO BE BY HIS SIDE
AS A TRUSTED PARTNER
AND HE DARES TO BE VEXED?
SIMON!
WHAT KEPT YOU?
SHOULD I SHOULD I PERHAPS LOWER MY VOICE FOR THE SAKE OF STEALTH?
UNNECESSARY, ALTHOUGH YOUR SILENCE IS ALWAYS APPRECIATED
BUT FUTILE NONETHELESS
HE ALREADY KNOWS WE'RE HERE
IN FACT HE'S COUNTING ON IT

LIGHTBOURNE?

I SEE THAT PROLONGED EXPOSURE OF YOUR UNPROTECTED HEAD HAS SHARPENED YOUR COGNITIVE PROCESSES IMMEASURABLY

THE MURDER OF LIONEL OXFORD COLLINS WAS NO MERE *STRATEGEM* TO CONCEAL THE SECRETS OF THIS GROTTO

CLEARLY, MALCOLM *DESIRED* THAT I FIND THIS PLACE

AND SO HE ENGINEERED A MURDER SIMPLY TO DRAW YOU *CLOSE*?

IS YOUR FORMER PARTNER SO FOOLISHLY *ARROGANT*?

A SIX A SILLY QUESTION

PERHAPS WE MUST PLUMB THE DEPTHS OF YOUR *OWN* DEDUCTIVE SKILLS

AS I INFORMED YOU ONCE *BEFORE*, EMMA

MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE MADE A HOBBY OF BUILDING *TRAPS*

AND THE WAY OF THIS ONE HAS ALREADY BEEN CONVENIENTLY *MARKED* FOR US

WE WON'T EVEN SOG OUR FEET

AFTER YOUR *UNNECESSARY* AND *ILL ADVISED* CONSTITUTIONAL THROUGH THE RAIN THAT SHOULD QUITE APPEAR TO YOU

YOU *KNEW* I WOULD FOLLOW?

THE UNIVERSE IS PACKED FULL OF *CONSTANTS*, EMMA

YOUR OBSTINATE NATURE IS ONE SUCH *IMMUTABLE*

SHALL WE THEN?

SIMON HAVE YOU GIVEN ANY THOUGHT TO THE FACT THAT WE ARE NEITHER *PREPARED*-

--NOR PROPERLY *ATTIRED* FOR A SUBTERRANEAN CHASE?

IF THIS IS *TRULY* A TRAP, THEN WHY ARE WE RUSHING HEADLONG INTO WHAT IS MOST ASSUREDLY *TERRA INFIRMA*?

FIRSTLY BECAUSE I TIRE OF LIGHTBOURNE'S *PRELUDES* AND I WISH TO HASTEN OUR DISCOVERY OF HIS TRUE INTENT

BECAUSE I AM WELL *AWARE* OF OUR LOCATION

AND *SECOND*?

SINCE LEAVING THE OXFORD COLLINS ESTATE AND TAKING TO *GROUND*, WE HAVE HELD A STEADY COURSE DUE SOUTH

BARELY DEVIATING A DEGREE OR SO IF MEASURED BY COMPASS

THAT MEANS

YES

WE'RE DIRECTLY *BENEATH* THE CITY OF PARTINGTON--

--AM I NOT *CORRECT*, MA.COLM?

CITY CENTER, TO BE ***PRECISE***, S.MON. BUT WHY ***MIRE*** YOU W TH SUCH NCONSEQUENTIAL DETAILS?

WHY ***INDEED?*** SOMEHOW BUILDING THE BETTER MOUSETRAP FOR MYSELF AND MY ASSISTANT SEEMS EGREGIOUSLY ***GRANDIOSE*** EVEN FOR ***YOU.***

AND I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT YOU CHAMP AT THE BIT TO GLOAT OVER JUST HOW THIS RAMSHACKLE ***APPARATUS*** W L DISPATCH US IN A SUITABLY GRISLY FASHION

BECAUSE YOU BELIEVE I'VE SOMEHOW UNDERMINED YOU

THAT WAS IT

YOU DISMANTLED MY LIFE'S WORK, SIMON. THUS I WAS FORCED TO BEGIN BUILDING ***AGAIN***

WHAT YOU SEE BEFORE YOU THE D GGING THE DAMMING, EVERY LAST GEAR AND LINK AND NAIL--

--I DID IT ALL R GHT UNDER YOUR ***UNSUSPECTING*** NOSE

*BUT TO WHAT **END?***

*WHY WOULD LIGHTBOURNE GO TO SUCH EFFORT SIMPLY TO DISPATCH HIS INTREPID RIVAL WITHIN SOME SUBTERRANEAN CLOCKWORKS WHERE NO ONE IN PARTINGTON COULD WITNESS HIS HARD-WROUGHT **HANDIWORK?***

UNLESS, OF COURSE HE FULLY INTENDED TO INVOLVE THE CITY ABOVE IN THIS CHICANERY

FITTING OBSERVATION, SIMON

UNDERMINING PARTINGTON WOULD BE A MOST APPROPRIATE END FOR THIS THANKLESS CITY, DON'T YOU THINK?

I'M GOING TO WASH IT ALL AWAY.

WATER REMAINS THE ULTIMATE SOLVENT, DOES IT NOT?

OR DOES SUCH AN OBVIOUS ASSERTION ERODE YOUR OWN SENSIBILITIES, SIMON?

WE HAVE A MOMENT -- LIGHTBOURNE HAS ALWAYS BEEN PRONE TO PONTIFICATING

SECURE YOURSELF

DO YOU GRASP THE ELEGANT GRAVITY OF MY MACHINATIONS?

CLEARLY.

THE SUBTLE PUPPETRY OF A SOCIOPATH.

CRETIN!

HARDLY AN EQUITABLE CONSERVATION, MALCOLM

DO YOU INTEND TO BLUDGEON EACH OTHER WITH INSULTS WITH THE FATE OF PARTINGTON HANGING SQUARELY OVER US?

IF THAT WERE THE CASE, THE BOTH OF US WOULD BE PUNCH DRUNK BY NOW.

USE WHATEVER MEANS YOU DEEM MOST EXPEDIENT TO SABOTAGE THIS EXCAVATOR EMMA

I'M GOING AFTER HIM

THAT'S WHAT LIGHTBOURNE WANTS!

THEN HE WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED!

BUT WHAT OF YOU, SIMON?

WHAT WRONG DO YOU ATTEMPT TO RIGHT IN SETTLING THIS DISPUTE ONCE AND FOR ALL?

SIMON, HE'S UTTERLY MAD

WE'VE GOT TO STOP THIS VILE CONTRAPTION.

DO YOU, SIMON?

THIS IS NO LONGER A WAR OF WILLS BETWEEN THE FORMER TEACHER AND HIS MATRICULATED PUPIL

HUNDREDS, PERHAPS EVEN THOUSANDS MIGHT PERISH IF THE TONS OF WATER CONTAINED BY THESE SLUICES IS LOOSED TO UNDERMINE THE POROUS FOUNDATIONS OF PARTINGTON

CAN'T EITHER OF YOU SEE THE REALITY BEYOND YOUR SHARED ENMITY?

SIMON, SIMON, WE CAN AVOID ANY FURTHER UNPLEASANTRIES.

DO TELL

YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY CONSIDER NEGOTIATING WITH HIM!

THE CITY--

IS INCIDENTAL IN THIS DISPUTE, ISN'T IT?

PARTINGTON COULD LINGER INTACT ABOVE FOR A WHILE LONGER IF YOU GIVE ME WHAT I WANT

AND WHAT DO YOU WANT, MALCOLM?

FIRST, I ASK THAT YOU BEG

FOR THE SAKE OF PARTINGTON

AND WHEN YOU HAVE SUFFICIENTLY HUMBLED YOURSELF, SIMON

YOU WILL THEN GIVE ME BACK THE PRISM

I KNOW YOU STILL POSSESS IT

SILENCE

JUST AS WHEN THE GYPSY UTTERED THOSE WORDS AFTER WE DEPARTED DREADFUL TELESTROUD AND ITS INVISIBLE POPULACE

WHAT IS THIS ENIGMATIC PRISM THAT STRIKES SIMON DUMB?

DON'T TRUST HIM, SIMON!

SHUT YOUR MOUTH, YOU FLAXEN TROLLOP!

JUST STAND THERE AND LOOK HELPLESS WHILE WE CONCLUDE OUR COMMERCE

OH, I AM FAR FROM HELPLESS, MR LIGHTBOURNE

WERE I TO REVEAL MY POWERS, THIS MASCULINE POSTURING WOULD GRIND TO A VERY FINAL, YET VERY SATISFYING, HALT

I ASK SO VERY LITTLE, SIMON

SWALLOW YOUR IMMENSE PRIDE, GET ON YOUR KNEES, AND PLEAD FOR THE HEALTH OF PARTINGTON

GRANT ME THESE TINY BOONS AND SPARE YOUR PARAMOUR THE WEIGHT OF THE CITY UPON HER PRETTY LITTLE HEAD

MISS B SHOP IS MY ASSISTANT

YOUR LOSS

CHAK

THE WHEELS WERE IN MOTION ALL ALONG, SIMON

YOU WERE BESTED AND YOU DIDN'T EVEN KNOW IT

DOOM IS RELEASED IN A GREAT CLATTERING OF CHAINS AND LEVERS

AND ALL TOO SUDDENLY IT ALL SLIDES INTO PLACE

A DEVICE MAGNIFICENT IN ITS HEARTLESSNESS

THE EXPOSED ROCKS AND MUD ALONG OUR PATHWAY HERE

THE BUTTRESSES THE SLUICES

AN UNDERGROUND LAKE BOTTLED AND PRESSURIZED

TO BE RELEASED IN A PROVOKING CASCADE AND AIMED AT THE SEDIMENTARY UNDERPINNINGS OF PARTINGTON.

TWISTING LIGHTBOURNE'S OWN WORDS...

THE CRIME SOLVER TURNED CRIMINAL SOLVENT

AND WHAT TO DO, EMMA?

LOOK AT YOU!

THE GREAT SIMON ARCHARD REDUCED TO IMPOTENCE WHILE ONLY I MAY DECIDE IF PARTINGTON LIVES OR DIES!

ADMIT IT, SIMON!

YOU WERE OUTWITTED!

I CAN NO LONGER HEAR SIMON OR LIGHTBOURNE OVER THE ROAR OF THE FLUMES

THE CAVERN IS SWIFTLY DISSOLVING AROUND US INTO A FROTH OF STICKS AND MUD

AND MY OWN PERCH IS *PRECARIOUS* AT BEST

SIMON!

WE'LL ALL BE BURIED *ALIVE* IF YOU DON'T END THIS SILLY ROW QUICKLY!

BUT SO IS LIGHTBOURNE'S HANGING AERIE

QUITE A CLASSIC *QUANDARY*, ISN'T IT?

STAY AND SPARE PARTINGTON FROM BEING SWALLOWED UP *WHOLE*

OR TURN TAIL AND SAVE THE *DISTRESSING* DAMSEL?

EMMA

THWOK

SHALL I DECIDE FOR YOU?

USE THE POWER...?

PARTINGTON OR YOUR PARTNER?

I'LL SWEEP THEM BOTH FROM THE MAPS!

GUH!

NO WIT? NO RETORT?

THE GREAT SIMON ARCHARD SAYS *NOTHING?*

ACTIONS

SPEAK LOUDER

KRAK

HE HAD THAT COMING

SIMON ARCHARD MAY BE ARROGANT AND BOORISH AND UNABASHEDLY RUDE

BUT LIGHTBOURNE IS DIABOLICAL AND CRUEL AND UNREPENTANTLY EVIL

AND I WOULD KICK HIM MYSELF IF I HAD MORE SOLID FOOTING

IT'S *OVER,* MALCOLM *STEM* THE FLOW OF THIS UNDERGROUND RIVER AND I'LL SHOW YOU LENIENCY

LURING ME INTO YOUR TRAP ONLY HASTENED *ENDGAME*

HA!

I SEE YOU'VE DEVELOPED A SENSE OF *HUMOR* DURING MY LONG ABSENCE

PARTINGTON WAS MERELY *BLEEDING* FROM MY FIRST INCISION, SIMON

BUT NOW YOUR QUAINT LITTLE CITY IS *HEMORRHAGING!*

KCHAK

SIMON, IT'S ALL COMING APART DOWN HERE!

I'M UNDERSTATING, OF COURSE

LIGHTBOURNE'S WATERWORKS MOST CERTAINLY LIVES UP TO HIS EXPECTATIONS

WE ARE VERY LIKELY DOOMED

SIMONNNNN
WATER
AGAIN.
AND WHERE ARE YOU OFF TO?
YOU CAN'T SAVE HER
SHE'S ALREADY DEAD!
I KNOW THAT
KRENCH

UHN

ARE YOU *ALL RIGHT,* SIMON?

THAT WAS QUITE A TUMBLE!

HOW FORTUITOUS THAT MY FLUMES *SOFTENED* YOUR FALL!

CLIPPED YOUR WING *THOUGH,* DIDN'T IT?

WHY -- ISN'T THAT MISS BISHOP SPLASHING ABOUT?

SUCH FORTITUDE FOR SO SLIGHT A GIRL!

SHALL YOU ATTEMPT A RESCUE?

ONCE MORE YOU ARE ALONE

SO VERY ALONE

NO?

-TSKE -- YOU'VE A *HABIT* OF BETRAYING YOUR *PARTNERS,* HAVEN'T YOU, SIMON?

I'VE *-UHRN --* *WON,* SIMON

I'VE THRASHED YOU UTTERLY!

DO YOU *HEAR* ME?!

OH, I HEAR YOU, YOU VAINGLORIOUS *BRAGGART!*

YOU KNOW WITH THAT PETULANT MISS BISHOP OUT OF THE PICTURE YOU MIGHT *RECONSIDER* OUR PARTNERSHIP

ALTHOUGH I WOULD INSIST ON TOP BILLING ONCE MORE -- DESPITE YOUR *ILL-GOTTEN* CELEBRITY

WHAT'S THIS?!

JUST LIKE THE OLD DAYS THEN?

I DO ALL THE *SLEUTHING* AND YOU CLAIM ALL THE *CREDIT?*

DOES THE PUP HAVE NO *ADMIRATION* FOR H.S. TEACHER?

I TAUGHT YOU ALL I KNOW, YOU *UNGRATEFUL* PUP

INDEED YOU *DID,* MALCOLM

PARTICULARLY YOUR OBSESSION WITH *ESCAPES*

ALMOST

LET ME TAKE A PAGE FROM *YOUR* BOOK, MALCOLM --

KRICH

KRAK

DO TRY TO KEEP UP

ALL MY PLANS

ALL MY EFFORTS

NO.

NO.

NO.

NO!

THIS IS *FINISHED*, LIGHTBOURNE

YOU JUST HAVEN'T ACCEPTED IT YET

EMMA!

WATER LOGGED *AGAIN*, I SEE

CONSIDER THIS AN OBJECT LESSON IN THE VALUE OF CHOOSING *DISCRETION* OVER VALOR

I CAN ASSURE YOU I TAKE NO PLEASURE IN HAVING TO

RESUSCITATE YOU

SIMON ?

WHAT WHAT WAS *THAT* ABOUT?

YOU ahem YOU HAD DROWNED MISS BISHOP

I WAS MERELY uh BREATHING *LIFE* BACK INTO YOUR LUNGS

AND YOU THOUGHT SKIPPING PAST CHEST COMPRESSIONS WAS *BEST*?

THANK YOU, WILL SUFFICE

THANK YOU FOR LETTING ME DROWN?

AND YET YOU CONTINUE TO PRATTLE ON

WHAT NOW?

WE FIND LIGHTBOURNE

I WOULD PREFER HIS *CORPSE*, TO CLOSE THIS NASTY BIT OF BUSINESS

I'VE NO NEED OF PHANTOM FOES TO HAUNT MY REMAINING DAYS

NOR I

IT SEEMS YOUR WISH IS *GRANTED*, SIMON

MY *BUOYANT* MISS BISHOP

LIGHTBOURNE.
I THINK NOT
IF I CAN'T HACK YOU TO PIECES WITH AN AXE
OR INUNDATE YOU IN WHAT WAS INARGUABLY THE GREATEST DEATH TRAP EVER CONCEIVED
WELL, THEN
I SUPPOSE I'LL HAVE TO SETTLE WITH BLASTING A HOLE IN YOUR PRETTY LITTLE HEAD, MISS BISHOP
SIMON I'LL GUT-SHOOT TO ASSURE A SLOW AND PAINFUL EXPIRATION
RESERVE ONE BULLET FOR YOURSELF, MALCOLM
YOU'RE PINNED AND HELPLESS
THE VERMIN IN THESE WARRENS WILL LIKELY FINISH YOU, JUST AS SLOWLY AND PAINFULLY
YOU'RE OUT OF OPTIONS MR LIGHTBOURNE -- PLEASE BE REASONABLE
NOT ANOTHER STEP, MISS BISHOP. CONSIDER YOURSELF A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE
SIMON NEVER TOLD YOU HOW WE PARTED WAYS, DID HE? THE HUMILIATION THAT MADE EACH OF US WHAT WE ARE NOW
TELL ME HAS SIMON EVER ENTRUSTED YOU WITH THE SECRETS OF THE ENIGMATIC PRISM?
TO BE CONTINUED!

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The PENNY ARCADIAN

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OMENS AND PORTENTS

OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

THE CITY'S FAVORITE SON, HIS MIND IS RAZOR-SHARP

EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY, HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE

A CUNNING CRIMESMITH DESIGNS A DISASTROUS REVENGE

GARGOYLES BEHAVE CURIOUSLY

The citizenry of Partington have noted in recent days that the city's winged gargoyle populace has exhibited strange behaviour giving rise to fear of a rabid infestation of the commonly harmless creatures

Self-described grottescologist Fenton Crombie offered that the otherwise benign gargoyles, now prone to gnashing their teeth at passing Partingtonians, are likely driven to some minor hysteria by the mysterious temblors jarring our city most fair since yesterday. Crombie likens the beasts to bellwethers on the order of canaries signaling deprivation of fresh air in gas-prone coalmines. But whereas these feathered birds silently succumb to suffocation, our own gargoyles may well be warning of dire events to yet transpire by their advancing excitable state •••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

GARGOYLE EXPERT FENTON CROMBIE

WATER WEARY

CITY PLANNER FEARS DROUGHT

Selectmen met last evening in sequestered session to discuss what one city planner described on condition of anonymity as a precipitous concern to our potable drinking and bathing needs In recent days, wells and cisterns throughout the city proper have risen and fallen to such degrees as to warrant alarm that reservoirs might run utterly dry. The aforementioned anonymous planner also offered forth that Partington's water resources might somehow be diverted at their source, perhaps due to subterranean shifts which •••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

DETECTIVE MISSING

The *Arcadian* continues to await word from master detective Simon Archard to provide his account of solving the patricide of Mr. Wickston Oxford-Collins, poisoned by his daughters and sole heirs to a millionaire's fortune. Archard and his erstwhile assistant Emma Bishop were last reported in pursuit of Malcolm Lightbourne, former partner of Archard and presumed accomplice to the Oxford-Collins murder •••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

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FIFTEEN YEARS, COME AND GONE
THOSE WERE THE HALCYON DAYS OF PARTINGTON
I'M CERTAIN EVEN YOU WERE YOUNGER AND PRETTIER THEN MISS BISHOP
THE HANDSOME LITTLE BOOKWORM?
THE ONE WHO STAMMERS AROUND THE GIRLS?
WE KNOW HIM NOT SOCIALLY, OF COURSE
THE PROFESSOR'S ASSISTANT
MERIWETHER DORMITORY
HAS A ROOM ALL TO HIMSELF
AND WHY IS THAT?
LIKELY BECAUSE NO ONE CAN STAND HIM, STRANGE BIRD THAT HE IS
302
ARCHARD, S.
BARTLESBY, P.
SOMERS, R.
O'HERLIHY, D.
NOK NOK
SIMON ARCHARD, YOU ARE AS YOUR SCHOOLMATES DESCRIBE YOU
WOT WHO?
SOLITARY, SINGLE-MINDED, AND PRONE TO STUTTERING
LIGHTBOURNE

YOU'RE MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE
THE MASTER DETECTIVE
TO...TO WHAT DO I OWE THIS *ESTEEMED* HONOR, SIR?
YOUR REPUTATION *PRECEDES* YOU, MR ARCHARD
YOU'VE CAUSED QUITE A *ROW* DOWN AT THE CONSTABULARY
I DON'T TAKE YOUR *MEANING*.
I *AM* SPEAKING TO THE YOUNG SLEUTH RESPONSIBLE FOR FERRETING OUT THE *CAMPUS THIEVERY?*
WHY, *YES*. IT'S JUST...IT'S JUST THAT I DON'T RECEIVE MANY VISITORS.
YOUR *UNORTHODOX* STUDY HABITS, NO DOUBT
OR PERHAPS YOU'VE BEEN DABBLING IN *BLACK RITES?*
OH, NO, *NO*, MR LIGHTBOURNE
IT'S MERELY A *SCIENTIFIC* EXPLORATION
I'VE POSTULATED THAT ONE CAN *FIX* THE TIME OF DEATH.
BY EXAMINATION OF THE CONTENTS PRESENT IN THE DECEDENT'S GASTRIC PATH
INDEED.
MESSY WORK, THOUGH PRODDING AND PROBING AROUND BLINDLY IN THE BOWELS OF A *HARE*
NOT LIKE CATCHING ONE WHO *BURGLES* THE POLYTECHNIC AFTER COURSE HOURS
BUT YOU'VE BEEN EXAMINING THE UNTIMELY DEMISE OF *LARGER* CREATURES ALSO?
PERHAPS *THIS* MIGHT AID YOUR DISSECTION CRUDE BUT FUNCTIONAL IN *RETRACTING* THE RIBCAGE.
I *DID* AID THE POLICE IN A MURDER MYSTERY VERY RECENTLY
DO TELL.
IT WAS *NOTHING*, REALLY A KILLING UNSOLVED FOR FAR TOO LONG
I HELPED THE INVESTIGATORS IDENTIFY THE CULPRIT BY MATCHING THE PRINTS OF HIS FINGERS TO IMPRESSIONS ON THE POOR BOY'S WRUNG NECK
I CALL IT *FINGER-TYPING*.
A USEFUL BIT OF INFORMATION
PERHAPS AS IMPORTANT AS THE VICTIM'S OWN NAME.
MICHAEL LIGHTBOURNE
YOUR YOUR *SON?*
YOUNGER BROTHER, MANY YEARS MY JUNIOR AND BORN TO A DIFFERENT MOTHER
YOU HAVE MY SINCERE *CONDOLENCES*, SIR
AND YOU MY *THANKS* FOR SOLVING MICHAEL'S MURDER...AS WELL AS AN OFFER TO BECOME MY APPRENTICE, IF YOUR STUDIES *PERMIT*, OF COURSE
MY EDUCATION ISN'T A *HINDRANCE*, MR LIGHTBOURNE
THE REGENTS HAVE RELEASED ME FROM MY ENROLLMENT
I SEEM TO HAVE SPENT FAR MORE TIME *SLEUTHING* THAN STUDYING
ARE YOU *SURE* ABOUT THIS?
QUITE SO.
YOU'VE DEMONSTRATED MORE FORWARD-THINKING IN YOUR *AMATEUR* INVESTIGATIONS THAN PARTINGTON'S FINEST HAVE SHOWN IN THRICE THAT TIME
BUT, SIR...I'M NOT THE MOST *CONVERSATIONAL* SORT.
I'VE NEVER HAD MANY FRIENDS. NOT IN THE ORPHAN HOUSE NOT HERE...
AND YOU'RE THE *BETTER* FOR IT
TRUST ME SIMON
FRIENDSHIP AND LOYALTY WILL BE NOTHING MORE THAN IMPEDIMENTS TO YOUR *GREATER* CALLING
302
~~ARCHARD~~
~~BARTLESBY~~
~~SOMERS, R.~~
~~O'HERLIHY, D.~~

THANKFULLY, A DRAMATIC PAUSE.

HAVING SURVIVED MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE'S WATERWORKS ENGINEERED TO SWALLOW UP PARTINGTON, SIMON AND I FIND OURSELVES SUBJECTED TO A VERY DIFFERENT TORTURE

LIGHTBOURNE IS TRAPPED AMONG THE SODDEN WRECKAGE, YET WIELDS A DRY AND DEADLY FIREARM AND AWFUL TRUTHS LONG UNREVEALED

DID YOU REALLY MEET HIM THIS WAY, SIMON?

OF COURSE HE DID, MISS BISHOP!

IT WAS LIKELY THE BEST DAY OF BOTH OUR LIVES, eh, SIMON?

THERE WAS NO BETTER PUPIL...

SO EAGER TO LEARN, SO EAGER TO PLEASE HIS MENTOR

SHALL I ihn SHALL I CONTINUE?

IN JUST FIVE YEARS, OUR RENOWN HAD GROWN CONSIDERABLY AS HAD OUR CLIENTELE

THE EPIPHANIC CHURCH RARELY EMPLOYED OUTSIDERS IN THEIR AFFAIRS

OUR INVOLVEMENT WAS TESTAMENT TO THE FAR-REACHING REPUTATION OF LIGHTBOURNE AND ARCHARD

WHOSE INVESTIGATORY SKILLS ARE UNSURPASSED, I HEAR TELL.

PERHAPS THEN YOU MIGHT SEE FIT TO TRAIN YOUR DEDUCTIVE LIGHT UPON A CASE OF STOLEN PROPERTY

AN ARTIFACT ONLY RECENTLY UNEARTHED AND OF GREAT, CONCERN, TO THE CHURCH HAS GONE MISSING, ABSCONDED FROM OUR CARE

YOUR WORSHIP PERHAPS IF YOU COULD BE MORE SPECIFIC ABOUT THIS ITEM—

...THOUGH I WOULD SURMISE THAT GREED MOTIVATES THIS CRIME

ARTIFACT, SIMON LISTEN CAREFULLY THIS IS NO MERE GILDED GOBLET

RUMOR HAS IT THAT THE CHURCH SQUIRRELS AWAY A TREASURE TROVE OF TALISMANS IN THIS VERY EDIFICE—

...SORCEROUS ARTIFACTS KEPT UNDER LOCK AND LATCH TO GUARD US LESS ENLIGHTENED FROM THEIR SINISTER INFLUENCE

AM I NOT CORRECT, YOUR WORSHIP?

MAGIC IS NOTHING BUT POPPYCOCK

IF ONLY THAT WERE TRUE, MR ARCHARD

BUT THIS POPPYCOCK HAS A *NAME*

ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE IT IS A JEWEL OF NEFARIOUS POWER

AND IN OUR TONGUE IT IS KNOWN IN CERTAIN INFAMY AS THE *ENIGMATIC PRISM*

SOME SORT OF SORCEROR'S STONE?

SURELY YOU ARE *JESTING*, FATHER

THE EN GMAT C PR SM

I HAD THOUGHT IT ONLY *LEGEND*

SIMON, IF IT INDEED *EXISTS*--

Oh, THE PRISM IS MORE THAN *STORIED*, MR LIGHTBOURNE

THE EPIPHANIC CHURCH HAD CONTRACTED THE FAMED ARCHAEOLOGIST PENBERTHY TO SEEK OUT AND PROCURE THE JEWEL FOR OUR *STUDY*

CLIVE PENBERTHY, THE ADVENTURER WHOSE SHIP WAS INBOUND FOR PARTINGTON THIS VERY MORN NG?

CLEARLY YOU ARE *INFORMED* ON PENBERTHY'S TRAVELS, MR LIGHTBOURNE

THE CHURCH EXPECTING HIS ARR VAL DISPATCHED TWO EM SSAR ES THIS MORN TO ACCOMPANY THE PRISM TO MY CHARGE

THEY WERE LATER FOUND DEAD, PENBERTHY HIMSELF GONE *MISSING*

THE JEWEL'S *CURSE* HAS LIKELY STRUCK ONCE MORE

NO ONE KNOWS ITS ORIGINS, THOUGH THE PR SM IS BE. EVED TO BE MANY CENTURIES OLD ITS VALUE *INCALCULABLE*

AS SUCH, IT HAS RARELY PASSED HANDS THROUGH *BENIGN* CIRCUMSTANCE

THERE ARE WHISPERS THAT THE JEWEL IS *ALLURING*

TO GAZE INTO ITS RADIANT FIRE IS TO LOSE SIGHT OF *ALL* REASON AND DESIRE NOTHING BUT THE *PRISM ITSELF*

TO SURRENDER TO ONE'S *BASEST* DES RES

A TRICK OF THE LIGHT, YOUR EMINENCE

LIGHT REFRACTED N SUCH A WAY TO RESEMBLE FLAMES.

AND IN OUR EXPERIENCE, AVARICE *ALWAYS* BRINGS OUT THE WORST IN MAN--

SIMON, MIGHT I *REMIND* YOU THAT A PRISM, BY DEFINITION, IS A MEDIUM WHICH *MISREPRESENTS* THE VIEW SPIED THROUGH IT

THE *ENIGMATIC PRISM* MAY WELL DISTORT ITS HOLDER'S VIEW OF THE WORLD, AND BY EXTENSION.. THE HOLDER *HIMSELF*.

REST EASY, CARDINAL INVICTUS

PENBERTHY AND THE JEWEL CAN'T BE *FAR*

THERE ARE ONLY *SO* MANY PLACES ONE CAN TRAFF C IN STOLEN GEMS.

EVEN ONES WITH MAGICAL PROPERTIES
COVER THE DOOR, SIMON.
LET US COMMENCE OUR INTERROGATIONS IN PRIVATE.
COME THEN COLQUIN
CLIVE PENBERTHY
SURELY, PARTINGTON'S MOST LOQUACIOUS INFORMANT MUST HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY ON THIS MATTER?
Uh. RIGHT
...DON'T HIT ME!
STRIKE YOU COLQUIN?
WHATEVER GAVE YOU SUCH A THOUGHT?
WELL THE WAY YOU'RE LEVELING THAT WALKING STICK LIKE IT'S A PIKE FOR A PIG
MERELY EMBELLISHING MY POINT, COLQUIN
CONTINUE
THERE'S uh. THERE'S LOTS OF SCUTTLEBUTT CIRCULATING ABOUT ON PENNY uh PENBERTHY
GO ON.
THERE'S NO NEED TO WHISPER, COLQUIN YOU'RE IN GOOD COMPANY
STAY IN CHARACTER YOU DULLARD
JUST TELL US WHAT YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT PENBERTHY AND THE GEM AND WE'LL LEAVE YOU TO YOUR BUSINESS
TING TING
MIND WHAT YER SNITCHIN', COLQUIN
THERE'S MORE'N US LOOKIN' FOR MISTER PENBERTHY AND THAT BAD LUCK OF A ROCK
I'D EVEN WAGER I'SAY THAT ME AN ROLLY ARE WILLIN' TO GO FARTHER FOR BOTH OF 'EM
RIGHT, ROLLY?
RIGHT, NASH
SO, IF YOU THINK THAT PONCY CANE IS A MATCH FOR ROLLY'S BLADE OR MY SAP...
THEN YOU MIGHT JUST NEED SOME SENSE KNOCKED INTO THAT HIGHBROW HEAD OF YOURN
KRKK
KKLUNKKKKKK
KLOD
KLOP
YOU WERE SAYING, MISTER NASH?
BRAVO, SIMON
WE WERE LIKELY OUTMATCHED IN BRAWN, YET YOU MEASURED THE SITUATION AND APTLY USED THE FIELD OF BATTLE TO OUR ADVANTAGE
I THOUGHT IT BEST TO HASTEN OUR EXIT AND CONTINUE THE HUNT WHERE NOW?
PERHAPS WE SHOULD COMMENCE TO WHERE ALL OF MISTER PENBERTHY'S TREASURES GO

FARTINGTON'S ARCHIVE OF ANTIQUITIES

WHERE ELSE WOULD ONE EXPECT TO FIND A TREASURE HUNTER AND HIS ILL GOTTEN BOOTY?

YOUR HELP IS MUCH *APPRECIATED*, DOCTOR SMITHEE

OF ALL THE ITEMS I CURATE, THIS I'M AFRAID IS *ALL* WE HAVE IN THE COLLECTION WHICH MAKES MENTION OF THE ENIGMATIC PRISM

SKASH

THE SECOND LEVEL..!

A PRECISION EAR AS A..WAYS, SIMON

FOUND YOU AND [illegible] KEEP

CLAWS OF SEPTA

PENBERTHY EXPEDITION

MISTER PENBERTHY, I PRESUME?

WHAT DO YOU WANT W TH ME?!

BAR THE DOOR SIMON

AND I WILL PROCEED TO *DE-CLAW* MISTER PENBERTHY

NOT BLOODY LIKELY!

THE CLAWS OF SEPTA ARE *KEEN* BLADES

I DUG THEM UP WHILE FENDING OFF CANN BAL SAVAGES

ROUTING *YOU* WILL BE AS EASY!

AHH!

KRASH

MALCOLM YOU'RE STABBED!

I'M FINE!

THE QUARRY, SIMON!

THE QUARRY!

PENBERTHY CAN *WAIT*, MALCOLM

YOUR WOUND CANNOT

WHAT HAVE I TOLD YOU?!

PENBERTHY HAS ESCAPED BECAUSE YOU ALLOWED *EMOTION* TO GET IN THE WAY OF BETTER JUDGMENT!

HEED MY WORDS, SIMON.

DO NOT LET IT HAPPEN *EVER* AGAIN

PENBERTHY WON'T GET FAR.

I SUSPECT I KNOW WHERE HE'LL APPEAR NEXT.

AND I BELIEVE CARDINAL INVICTUS CAN CONFIRM MY THOUGHTS IF HE WILL ANSWER JUST *ONE* QUESTION

WELL, *THAT* CERTAINLY EXPLAINS A GREAT DEAL

DON'T JUDGE HIM TOO *HARSHLY*, MISS BISHOP

SIMON ARCHARD MAY BE A COLD FISH BY MY OWN *ENCOURAGEMENT*

BUT FOR WHAT HE LACKS IN *EMPATHY*, SIMON MAKES UP IN INTELLIGENCE AND REASONING SKILL BEYOND THE AVERAGE

HE'S A *SMART* ONE, OUR BOY ALBEIT AMBIVALENT TO A FAULT

HE DOES ME *PROUD*

SIMON CAN ALL THIS BE *TRUE?*

I HAD ASSUMED THAT YOU WERE BIRTHED FULLY FORMED

YOU... YOU'RE NOT *LISTENING*

AND WHY SHOULD HE?

ALTHOUGH LIGHTBOURNE IS AMUSED BY THIS PROMENADE DOWN MEMORY LANE, SIMON DOESN'T SHARE HIS MERRIMENT

NONE OF THIS IS LAUGHABLE TO SIMON ...AND THE REASONS NO DOUBT ARE ABOUT TO BE FULLY ILLUMINATED

QUITE UNCHARACTERISTIC OF HIM TO BE SO *LACONIC*, MISS BISHOP

KRITCH KRITCH

I ASSURE YOU THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE A LE THOSE ...RS AGO, ESPECIALLY AFTER HE HAD DEFEATED HIS STAMMER

"INTERESTINGLY, AS WE HURRIED AFTER PENBERTHY SIMON POINTED OUT THE IRONY THAT OUR QUEST FOR THE ENIGMATIC PRISM WOULD BOTH BEGIN AND END AT THE EPIPHANIC CHURCH

ACTUALLY THAT'S NOT QUITE TRUE

IT WOULD END IN THE CHURCH'S INFAMOUS MUSEUM OBSCURA

*PENBERTHY HAD BEEN THERE **BEFORE**, OF COURSE HIS EMINENCE **CONFIRMED** THAT TO SIMON'S INQUIRY*

*PENBERTHY'S BALLYHOOED EXPEDITIONS HAD, IN FACT, **STOCKED** THIS SECRET CACHE OF ARCANE ARTIFACTS*

HE KNEW THIS PLACE ALL TOO WELL

*"IMAGINE HIS SURPRISE THEN WHEN HE EYED THE ENIGMATIC PRISM HIDING **IN PLAIN SIGHT**"*

BUT BUT

HOW CAN THE GEM BE *THERE* WHEN I'VE GOT IT TUCKED SAFELY AWAY RIGHT--

--HERE?

PENBERTHY THEN DECIDED THAT *TWO* ENIGMATIC PRISMS WERE FAR MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN JUST THE ONE

FASH

MY EYES!

A DECOY --A FALSE GEM FILLED WITH FLASH POWDER TO HELP YOU SEE THE *LIGHT*, PENBERTHY YOU ARE WITHIN THE *EPIPHANIC* CHURCH, AFTER ALL

BUT THE PRISM *BLINDS* A MAN TO REASON, DOES IT NOT?

OR WAS THE GEMS THEFT MERELY A *DIVERSION?* A RUSE TO DIVERT INTEREST FROM YOUR PLUNDER OF THE MUSEUM OBSCURA?

PITY THE CLAWS OF SEPTA DIDN'T CUT YOU *DEEPER*, DETECTIVE

Diamond Dagger of Khan Singh

PERHAPS THE DIAMOND DAGGER WILL *FINISH* YOU OFF RIGHT

STAY OUT OF THIS S.MON

MISTER PENBERTHY AND I HAVE *UNFINISHED* BUSINESS.

TIME TO PAY FOR YOUR CRIMES, *CLIVE*

MY CRIMES?!

TIME FOR *EACH* OF US TO PAY, I SUSPECT *MALCOLM*

THE PRISM IS INDEED A BEAUTIFUL BAUBLE, CLIVE

SO TEMPTING SO *IRRESISTIBLE*

IS IT REALLY *WORTH* ALL THE EFFORT?

YOU'LL NEVER KNOW!

NONE OF THESE TRINKETS CAN COMPARE!

CLIVE THE *LAMP!*

WHAT OF IT?

THE PRISM HAS SURVIVED DISASTER BEFORE --

THOK

NO!

IT'S MINE!!

YOU SAID IT YOURSELF, MISTER PENBERTHY

I FOUND IT, I SHALL KEEP IT

BUT I KILLED FOR IT!

I

YOU DON'T *DESERVE* IT CLIVE

YOJ KILLED HIM

LEST HE KILL *YOU*, SIMON

I SAVED YOUR UNGRATEFUL LIFE AND I DID IT WITH AN EMOTIONAL DETACHMENT YOU HAVE *YET* TO LEARN

I KNOW NOW THAT THE LEGENDS ARE *FALSE*.

THE PRISM DOES NOT DISTORT ONE'S WORLDVIEW IT *CLARIFIES* IT

I *ALONE* SHOULD POSSESS IT

CAN YOU SEE THE FLICKER OF BLUE FIRE AT ITS CENTER?

A TRICK OF THE LIGHT, SIMON?

DOES IT DANCE FOR YOU ALSO?

PLEASE GIVE IT TO ME BEFORE I DO SOMETHING *RASH*

I'M VERY SORRY, MALCOLM

I CANNOT

CAN NOT OR *WILL* NOT?

THIS IS *OPPORTUNITY*, SIMON. PENBERTHY WILL SUFFER ALL THE BLAME AND THE PRISM CAN BE *OURS*

SWALLOW YOUR TREPIDATION

CLIVE PENBERTHY HAD TO DIE *DESERVED* TO DIE

SURELY YOU CAN *SEE* THAT NEVITABILITY

ALL I SEE ARE *YOUR* HANDS CAREFULLY MANIPULATING THIS TERRIBLE AFFAIR

I *OVERHEARD* YOUR LITTLE MORALITY PLAY AT THE TOBACCONIST. MY "*PRECISION EAR*" AND ALL

PENBERTHY MUST HAVE BEEN IN *DIRE* FINANCIAL STRAITS. UTTERLY *DESPERATE*

AND YOU *KNEW*, DIDN'T YOU?

SIMON, THE *FIRE*

WE HAVEN'T MUCH TIME. LET'S DISCUSS THIS LATER. LIKE OLD *FRIENDS*

NO, MALCOLM

WE DISCUSS IT *NOW*

I IMAGINE YOU CONVINCED PENBERTHY THAT *YOU* COULD EASE HIS MONEY WOES BY ENGINEERING A CRIME THAT PARTINGTON'S GREATEST DETECTIVE *COULDN'T* SOLVE.

DO YOU WISH ME TO ADMIT IT ALL?

IS THAT THE AFFIRMATION YOU DESIRE?

WOULD THAT MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER *SMARTER* THAN ME, SIMON?

VERY WELL, THEN *HAVE* YOUR CONFESSION --

I DID IT

I TOLD PENBERTHY THAT HE'D BEEN BETRAYED, HIMSELF *ROBBED* OF A LIFETIME OF SERVICE

BUT THE GREEDY SOT WANTED MORE THAN HIS DUSTY *JUNK*, RUNNING OFF WHILE I DISPATCHED THOSE EPIPHANIC ERRAND BOYS ON THE DOCK

AND AND

AND I WOULD HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT IF NOT FOR MY DAMNABLE *ASSISTANT!*

YOUR *PARTNER*, YOU MEAN!

DELAY NO FURTHER, SIMON

YOU KNOW FULL WELL *WHO'S* IN CHARGE!

NOW GIVE ME THE PRISM!

I'VE NO WISH TO *HURT* YOU!

SPARE ME YOUR *LIES*, MALCOLM!

I'VE ~~SUNK~~ HEARD QUITE ENOUGH OF THEM TODAY

THAT'S THE *DEEPEST* CUT OF ALL ISN'T IT, SIMON?

THAT I AM LESS THAN YOU *HUMAN*

OR DOES YOUR PAIN COME FROM KNOWING THAT I HAD FOOLED YOU SO *EASILY*?

MALCOLM

IN THE END, EVERYTHING YOU BELIEVED ALL CAME TUMBLING DOWN, SIMON

THIS INFERNAL PLACE IS A TINDERBOX!

WE SHOULD DISCUSS YOUR GUILT IN LESS *TENTATIVE* ENVIRONS MY--

FRIEND?

NO

LEAVE ME

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

I THINK I'D MUCH RATHER END *HERE* BE BURNED UP WITH ALL OF THESE EVIL OLD RELICS.

MALCOLM

DESPITE YOUR *DUPLICITY*, I DON'T WISH TO SEE MY *MENTOR* PERISH THIS WAY

I SAID *NO*

I WON'T FACE PUBLIC HUMILIATION AS PARTINGTON PARADES ME TO THE *GALLOWS*.

JUST GO

CONSIDER THE BUSINESS *YOURS*.

YOU ARE INDEED THE *MASTER SLEUTH*, SIMON

PLEASE TAKE MY HAND, MALCOLM...

I CAN'T LEAVE YOU TO DIE

SIMON YOU TRULY ARE *WITLESS*

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS GONE, YOU ARE STILL SO EASILY MANEUVERED

LEAVE *YOU* THE AGENCY? *FAH!*

YOU'RE NOT FIT TO WALK IN MY SHADOW.

IT'S HIGH TIME I TOOK LEAVE OF *YOU* IN FACT, WHY NOT CONSIDER YOUR UNIMPRESSIVE EMPLOYMENT

—TERMINATED.

MAL ?

SHUK

DON'T LOOK SO *SURPRISED*, SIMON

YOUR DEMISE WAS INEVITABLE

ALL THESE YEARS WERE BETTER SPENT GROOMING A PUPPET THAN A PARTNER

I HAD THAT *EPIPHANY* QUITE SOME TIME AGO

BACK WHEN THE THOUGHT OF POSSESSING THE ENIGMATIC PRISM HELD JUST A *GLIMMER* OF HOPE

WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, YOUR *NOTORIETY* WILL BE AS PENBERTHY'S FELLOW *CONSPIRATOR*

AND THE PRISM WILL BE ASSUMED *LOST* IN YOUR GRASP AMID THE CONFLAGRATION

OF COURSE, I WILL HAVE PLUCKED THE GEM FROM YOUR RIGOR-STIFF HAND *BEFORE* THE—

OH, NO.

NO!

I SUPPOSE I HAD THAT COMING

THE FALL DIDN'T KILL ME AND NEITHER DID TREADING THE WAVES BENEATH THE EPIPHANIC CATHEDRAL

I WON'T BORE YOU WITH THE INCONSEQUENTIALS

YOU'VE ALREADY GUESSED THAT I CONVALESCED AMONG GYPSIES WHILE ALL ASSUMED I WAS QUITE—

—DEAD

SIMON HOW DID YOU

YES, SIMON. HOW *DID* YOU SURVIVE YOUR SKEWERING, NOT TO MENTION THE BURNING MUSEUM?

OBVIOUSLY MY SCARS SHOW FULL WELL THAT THE FLAMES TOUCHED *ME* EVEN AS I FELL

I DON'T KNOW, MALCOLM

PERHAPS I EXPERIENCED MY *OWN* EPIPHANY

I REMEMBER A BOLT OF LIGHT... AND THEN I AWOKE IN A SANATORIUM WITH NO OTHER MEMORY OF MY ESCAPE

I THOUGHT YOU *ROSE* FROM THE GRAVE TO KILL ME, MALCOLM

BUT YOU ONLY CAME BACK FOR THE PRISM
ACTUALLY
I CAME BACK FOR BOTH
AND IF I CAN'T HAVE ONE
I'LL HAVE THE OTHER!
BLAM BLAM
DOWN, EMMA!
NO, SIMON NOT-
-- buh THE WATER
LIGHTBOURNE?
GONE HE FIRED HIS TWO SHOTS
GIVEN THE STATE OF HIS SUBTERRANEAN LAIR, HE'S LIKELY GONE ABOVE GROUND NOW
WE NEED TO FIND HIS BOLTHOLE TO THE SURFACE IMMEDIATELY
YES, OF COURSE JUST ALLOW ME A MOMENT TO CATCH MY BREATH
WE HAVEN'T THE TIME, EMMA
WE'VE GOT TO FIND MALCOLM NOW--
BEFORE HE REALIZES HE ALREADY HAS THE ENIGMATIC PRISM!
HAD WE TRULY SEEN THE LIGHT BOTH SIMON AND I WOULD HAVE REALIZED THAT SURVIVING LIGHTBOURNE ONCE WAS HAPPENSTANCE
TWICE COULD LIKELY BE MERE COINCIDENCE
A THIRD TIME WOULD SURELY CALL FOR NO LESS THAN DIVINE PROVIDENCE

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BET THERE *WON'T* BE A PAPER TOMORROW *EITHER* IF THEY DON'T NAB THAT *LIGHTBOURNE* SOD FOR CAUSIN' ALLA BUILDIN'S TO DROP INNA GROUND
TWON'T BE NO EASY TASK THOUGH CRAFTY *EVIL GENIUS* THAT LIGHTBOURNE IS
I HEAR TELL MR. LIGHTBOURNE WAS HOLDIN' THE GREAT DETECTIVE *SIMON ARCHARD* AND HIS LADY ASSISTANT, THE BEAUTIFUL MIZ *EMMA BISHOP*, AT THE POINT OF A *GUN* AND TELLIN' *TERRIBLE* SECRETS ABOUT THE PAST AND WHY THEY AIN'T PALS NO MORE KILLIN' THAT FAMOUS ARCHEOLOGIST *CLIVE PENBERTHY* AND LYIN' TO SIMON ALL OVER A LITTY *GLASS* THING
STABBED SIMON IN THE *BACK*, HE DID FOR *REAL*, NOT JUST PLAYIN' HIM FOR A *PATSY*
BIDIN' TIME LIGHTBOURNE WAS, AND FAKIN' A BUSTED LEG, *TOO*, JUST SO'S HE COULD SKIN AWAY AND GET THAT ENIG ENIMIG THAT *THING* WHAT CATCHES THE LIGHT
ME AND CECIL BONIFACE ONCE GOT IN A TUSSLE OVER MY FAVORITE SHOOTER AN' A COUPLE BLUE AGGIES
PLEASE NO BLOODY HOUSES TEAR DOWN THE
SORRY!
NO PAPER TODAY!
THE PENNY ARCADIAN
hopes to resume publication very soon!
The PENNY ARCADIAN

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RATS
CHEE
HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HARBINGERS OF WOE, CARRIERS OF VIRULENCE, AND THE FIRST TO DESERT A SINKING SHIP
SHOW US THE WAY, LITTLE ONES
BUT THESE VERMIN AREN'T FLEEING A DOWNFLOODING VESSEL
THEY'RE SCURRYING FROM OUT OF THE CAVERNOUS RECESSES BENEATH PARTINGTON, NOW NO LONGER FIT FOR MAN NOR BEAST
SIMON?
WHAT IS IT?
HAVE WE REACHED THE SURFACE?
TAKE MY HAND, EMMA THE COBBLESTONES ARE UPENDED
YOU MUST LET YOUR EYES ADJUST TO THE LIGHT
I CAN SEE PERFECTLY WELL, SIMON
WHO COULD HAVE GUESSED THE EXTENT OF THE DEVASTATION WROUGHT BY
ME, EMMA
I'M TO BLAME
I COULD HAVE STOPPED HIM DOWN THERE AND I DIDN'T.
AND NOW PARTINGTON SUFFERS FOR MY INACTION
NO, SIMON, NOT YOU -- LIGHTBOURNE

FIRE AND RUMBLING AND DARK CREATURES ON THE WING

ONE CAN SCARCELY DISCERN THE CRIES OF THE WOUNDED FROM THE SHRIEKS OF THE GARGOYLES LITTERING THE SKY

LIGHTBOURNE DID ALL *THIS*

HE ALWAYS DID PREFER A *GRAND* EXIT

THE CREATURES ARE IN A *FEEDING* FRENZY

SIMON, THAT MAN

DEAD FRIGHTENED TO DEATH BY THE LOOKS OF T

AND THE GARGOYLES THEY'RE *NOT*

SKREEEK!

I CAN ONLY *HOPE*

BUT I FEAR IT'S MERELY *WISHFUL* THINKING THAT THEIR APPETITES ARE BEING *SATED* BY THE TIDE OF RATS WHICH LED US HERE

NONE OF THIS IS *YOUR* FAULT SIMON

LIGHTBOURNE IS BEYOND REASON *OR* RATIONAL THOUGHT

AND I AM THE *FOCUS* OF THAT MADNESS

NO ONE NEAR ME IS *SAFE*

WELL THEN

IF ALL OF PARTINGTON REVOLVES AROUND *YOU*, THEN WHY NOT DO SOMETHING FOR THE *VICTIMS* OF LIGHTBOURNE'S LUNACY?

I AM

I'M GOING TO FIND HIM

TO WHAT END?

PRECISELY

THAT'S *NOT* AN ANSWER, SIMON

WOULD SOMEONE PLEASE HELP ME!

ONE SIDE, GRANNY!

LADYBIRD NELL?

WHAT'S THE MATTER, NELL? ARE YOU *HURT*?

NOT ME, LASS *THE GIRLS!*

THE HOUSE HAS FALLEN AND NO ONE WILL HELP ME!

SIMON!

THERE'S NO STOPPING HIM

THIS ROW WITH LIGHTBOURNE WILL LIKELY END WITH ONE OR *BOTH* OF THEM ON THE SLAB

NEL... HOW *BAD* IS IT?

HOW FAR DOES THE DAMAGE *EXTEND*?

MOST ALL OF TAMMANY AND DOWNTOWN ARE POCKED AND PITTED BY THESE SINKY *CRATERS*.

AND JUST LOOK AT MY POOR HOUSE!

I'VE GOT NO ACCOUNT OF WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN INSIDE WHEN IT CAME DOWN!

BROTHEL'S *DONE FOR*, NELL

NOTHIN' BUT *KINDLIN'* LEFT

PETE!

PETER GRIMES, IS THAT *YOU* UP THERE?

MIZ EMMA?

BEST YOU STAY BACK

A PROPER LADY LIKE YERSELF SHOULDN'T OUGHTA SEE *THIS*

NO

MICHELLE

I KNEW HER NOT WELL

. BUT ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT SHE DIDN'T DESERVE TO BE A CASUALTY OF THIS ESCALATING CONFLICT WITH LIGHTBOURNE

I MEMBER WHEN SHE DRESSED YOU UP IN THAT PRETTY RED PRESS

YOU LOOKED SO LOVELY

SHE'S BREATHING, PETE. JUST *BARELY*, THOUGH

KRRERKK

BEST DO IT *QUICK*, MIZ EMMA

ROOF'S -UHRN- GONNA COME CRASHIN IN

-HMM-

I *CAN'T* -UHH- *LIFT* HER ON MY OWN, PETE

HELP ME *PLEASE*

ANYTHIN' FOR YA, MISS

SHE'S NOT HEAVY AT ALL

THIS ONE'S A *SWEETHEART*, DOCTOR

TAKE GOOD CARE OF HER

PETE I'VE GOT TO GO

OR THERE WILL BE *MORE* LIKE MICHELLE

I *SHOULD HAVE KNOWN* PETE WOULD INSIST ON *ACCOMPANYING* ME

WHOLE *CITY'S* FALLIN' TA *PIECES*, MIZ EMMA

WHAT'S THIS *ABOUT*?

SOMEONE GOT A *BEEF* WITH MISTER ARCHARD?

YOU *COULD* SAY THAT, PETE

YOU MIGHT REMEMBER THE EMINENT MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE

MISTER ARCHARD'S OLD *DETECTIN'* PARTNER? THE ROGUE WHO WENT MISSIN'?

THE VERY ONE

HE'S ALIVE AND RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR PRESENT *DISASTERS*

ALL FOR AN ELUSIVE JEWEL KNOWN AS THE *ENIGMATIC PRISM*

LIGHTBOURNE MURDERED THE FAMED ARCHEOLOGIST *CLIVE PENBERTHY* OVER IT MORE THAN A DECADE AGO

HE'LL LIKELY *KEEP* KILLING UNTIL HE FINDS IT

THEN YOU BEST NOT WANDER THESE STREETS ALL BY YER *LONESOME*

PETE, I'M *FINE*. I DON'T NEED AN ESCORT

PEOPLE OUT THERE NEED *YOU*

BUT MIZ EMMA, THE RESIDENCE

--IS BARELY STANDING

I SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED AS MUCH

A RIGHT *CHASM*, THAT IS.

THAT THE *WORD*, MIZ EMMA?

YES, PETE

THOUGH IT MAY AS WELL BE A MOAT AROUND A CASTLE WALL

CAN WE JUMP IT?

NOT BLOODY.. AH I MEAN, NO, MISS. LIKELY SNAP YOUR LEG AND SCUFF YOUR PRETTY KNEES IN THAT CRE-VASSE

HE TRIES SO HARD FAILED GENTLEMAN PETE

TRY AROUND THE BACK, MIZ EMMA?

NO PETE

IF WE CAN'T ENTER THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR

THEN WE'LL JUST HAVE TO FIND OUR OWN MEANS OF INGRESS

COME AGAIN, M'SS?

MIND THE KNOTHOLES WITH YOUR PRETTY SHOES, MIZ EMMA

PETE'S VIGOR AND FIGHTING SPIRIT COULD BE PUT TO BETTER USE THAN LOOSING TIMBERS FOR A MAKESHIFT SPAN

HANDS, PETE

SORRY

GIVEN OUR LUCK IN BESTING MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE THUS FAR, PERHAPS IT'S HIGH TIME WE CALLED IN REINFORCEMENTS.

IF ONLY TO BOOST MORALE AND BRING UP THE REAR

WE ENTER THROUGH SIMON'S LIBRARY

OR MORE PRECISELY, WHAT REMAINS OF IT

WELL, IF ANYTHING, IT'S AN IMPROVEMENT OVER SIMON'S PREVIOUS ENTRY SYSTEM

INSCRUTABLE AND INFURIATING THOUGH IT WAS

RRRKKK

PETE!

MIZ EMMA! GRAB HOLD O' SUMTHIN'!

GRAB WHAT?!

RRRMBBB

AS IF AN AVALANCHE OF LEATHER AND PARCHMENT PROVIDES ANY PURCHASE OF NOTE

FBUM

WHUP!

FBUM FBUM FBUM FBUM

WE THAT WASN'T SO BAD

I'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR THIS PARTICULAR TREATISE FOR AGES.

THERE WAS AN *EASIER* WAY DOWN THE BOOKSHELVES M'Z EMMA

OH I *NEVER* DO THINGS THE EASY WAY PETE

IF THE FORENSICS FILES FELL then I'D MOST SURELY BE *SQUASHED*

IS THEY THE *FOR EN-SICS* UP THERE?

...JUST *A THROUGH E*, PETE

LET'S NOT TEMPT THE *REMAINING* ALPHABET

I A WAYS D D E ND LETTERS TO BE *HARD*, MISS

GOOD ONE, PETE

DIDJA HEAR THE ONE ABOUT THE BARRISTER AND THE MULE?

THAT'... DO PETE

I BELIEVE I CAN MAKE THIS LEAP

GIVE ER A RUNN'N START

EASY ENOUGH!

PETE, WHAT'S *WRONG?*

IT'S GOOD TO LAUGH AND ALL ESPECIALLY *NOW*

BUT SHOULDN'T WE HURRY ALONG AND FIND MR. ARCHARD AND THAT *LATEBURN* SOD?

PUGILIST PETE REFUSING TO FIX HIS FIGHTS AND HONEST TO A FAULT

YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY *RIGHT*, PETE

AFTER ALL I'VE EXPERIENCED IN THE LAST DAYS, I FEEL

A BIT PUNCH DRUNK?

IF THAT INCLUDES BEING DASHED AND NEARLY DROWNED, *YES*

THE RESIDENCE IS A MAZE OF PASSAGES WHEN IN *GOOD* REPAIR

NOW WE MUST CONTEND WITH CRUMBLING MORTAR AND DRIZZLING SHARDS OF STAINED GLASS RELEASED FROM THE GLAZING IN THE CATHEDRAL'S WINDOWS

AND THEN THERE IS *OPHELIA*

WHO?

OPHELIA PRESSMONK, PETE

OPHELIA, WHAT ARE YOU DOING *HERE?*

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU?

WHAT WHAT DO I LOOK AT?

IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE STUCK YOUR HIRSUTE LITTLE CHIN INTO AFFAIRS BEST LEFT TO BIGGER FOLKS, OPHELIA

TOOK A BEATIN' SHE DID WITH A *STICK*, BY THE LOOKS OF IT

A CANE

HE WOULDN'T STOP HITTING ME

DO YOU *BLAME* HIM, OPHELIA?

YOU HE-PED TO REVEAL MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE'S ROLE IN THE OXFORD-COLLINS MURDER

YOU'RE QUITE *LUCKY* HE DIDN'T FINISH YOU OFF OUTRIGHT

DIDN'T MENTION ANY OF THAT

KEPT YAPPING ABOUT HIS PRECIOUS *PRISM* OVER AND OVER

SAID HE HAD TO SAVE HIS STRENGTH THOUGH

SAID HE HAD TO LEAVE SOMETHING FOR *SIMON*

OPHELIA WHERE IS HE?

WHERE'S LIGHTBOURNE NOW?

SHE'S OUT MIZ EMMA UN-CON SCIOUS, I MEAN

LITTLE GAL'S BEEN STOMPED GOOD

BAD, I MEAN

SHE NEEDS THE ATTENTION OF A DOCTOR, PETE

YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE HER

AND LEAVE YOU MISS?

PLEASE PETE FOR ME

IF THERE WERE TIME FOR REFLECTION I WOULD LIKELY REGRET THAT

BUT OPHELIA NEEDS PETE AND SIMON NEEDS ME, AND BY THAT ACCOUNTING I AM LEFT TO NAVIGATE THE PITFALLS ALONE

SIMON'S COLLECTION OF VENOMOUS CREEPIES SLITHERS AND SCABBERS FREE OF THEIR TERRARIUM HOMES

HSSSSSSS

SPIDERS AND SNAKES I CAN WEATHER

MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE IS A PREDATOR OF AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT ORDER AND PHYLUM

HE DESIRES ONLY THE ENIGMATIC PRISM

AND SIMON'S HEAD ON A PIKE, OF COURSE

I CAN SCARCELY GUESS HOW MANY HAVE EXPIRED TO ACHIEVE THE FORMER

FSSSSST

OH CRAP

THE UPHEAVAL MUST HAVE TWISTED THE GASWORKS OR OVER TURNED CAUSTIC CHEMICALS IN SIMON'S LABORATORY

THE STAIRWELL IS A HEAP OF FLAMING RUIN AND LIGHTBOURNE CAN BE NOWHERE ELSE THAN THE UPPER TIERS OF THE RESIDENCE

BUT HOW CAN I ASCEND ?

THE DUMBWAITER! PERFECT!

I DISPEL THE PAIN OF BLISTERS WITH THOUGHTS OF THIS PRISM WHICH DRIVES SIMON AND LIGHTBOURNE TO SUCH DESPERATION.

EACH BELIEVES THAT THE OTHER ALREADY POSSESSES IT

AND ONLY ONE OF THEM CAN BE CORRECT BUT IF SO THEN WHERE?

SIMONS··

THWUMP

AHEM

CURIOUS

I DON'T RECALL ORDERING ROOM SERVICE

BUT THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR JUST DESSERTS, WOT?

SIMON

WHAT HAS HE DONE TO YOU?

WHAT HE DESERVES!

I'VE **BEATEN** HIM. I'VE **HUMILIATED** HIM. AND I'LL **FLAY** THE FLESH FROM HIS BONES IF HE DOESN'T *GIVE ME THE PRISM*

I MIGHT JUST DO THAT LAST LITTLE THING ANYWAY FOR ALL MY *TROUBLES*.

BUT YOU HAVE IT

YOU'VE ALWAYS HAD IT

ALL OF THIS HAS BEEN FOR *NAUGHT*. SIMON TOLD ME *HIMSELF* THAT YOU'VE POSSESSED THE ENIGMATIC PRISM ALL ALONG

Heh. *NICELY DONE*, SIMON

AND HERE I THOUGHT YOU LEARNED SO VERY LITTLE FROM ME

MISS BISHOP'S LITTLE BOY *WON'T* WORK

SHE

HE SPEAKS THE TRUTH, MALCOLM

NO SHE DOESN'T!

WHATEVER *TRUTH* THERE IS TO BE FOUND I'LL BEAT OUT OF HER!

SO FAST

THE DEEPER HIS RAGE, THE MORE *DANGEROUS* HE BECOMES

STOP THIS!

THRAK

AND I AM AS GOOD A TARGET AS ANY

HE CAN'T SAVE YOU!

HE *WON'T* SAVE YOU

KYRINK

SIMON'S DONE FOR

SO ARE *YOU*

IF I HAVE TO, I'LL SIMPLY WAIT FOR THIS DAMNABLE DOMICILE TO BURN TO THE GROUND AND THEN SIFT THROUGH THE *ASHES*

I CAN BE *PATIENT*. I'VE DONE IT *BEFORE*

THEN YOU'RE IN FOR A *LONG* HUNT

I WON'T SURVIVE THIS

UNLESS YOU'RE AS GOOD AT ESCAPES AS YOU PROFESS

SIMON?

UNHAND HER

NOW

UNFF!

THOK

MALCOLM WHY IS IT SO *DIFFICULT* FOR YOU TO REALIZE

THAT *EVERYTHING* YOU DESIRE WILL ALWAYS SLIP FROM YOUR GRASP?

YOU'VE BEEN HOLDING THE PRISM SINCE YOU FIRST TOOK BACK YOUR CANE IN THE CAVES BENEATH PARTINGTON

PLINK

THE PRISM!

RIGHT THERE ALL ALONG AND *YOU* LET ALL OF THIS COME TO PASS WHEN YOU COULD HAVE JUST GIVEN IT UP!

NO

I COULDN'T *THEN* AND I WON'T *NOW*

YOU KNOW ALL TOO WELL THAT SAFEGUARDING THE PRISM HAS ALWAYS INVOLVED *SACRIFICE*

I'LL LIVE WITH THE EVENTS OF THIS DAY

AND YOU CA[illegible] *ME* THE VILLAIN?

AT LAST I EMBRACE MY PETTY FOIBLES WHILE YOU WALL YOURSELF OFF FROM HUMANITY WITHIN THIS IMPLACABLE TOWER!

GENTLEMAN, THE PRISM!

THEY'LL *BOTH* LOSE IT IF THEY DON'T MIND THEIR DODGES AND PARRIES

THAT'S IT

THEY DODGE THEY PARRY I AM LEFT TO *FEINT*

YOU CAN STOP THIS NONSENSE!

I'VE GOT THE PRISM!

I'LL STOP WHEN HE'S GOOD AND *DEAD*, MISS B'SHOP!

KRAK

UHN!

WELL WHEN *THAT'S* DONE YOU FIND YOUR ENIGMATIC LITTLE PRISM RIGHT HERE

IN SIMON'S THINK TANK

YOU STUPID COW!

KLOD

EHN!

GET *OUT* OF MY WAY!

EMMA!

THE JOISTS ARE SPLINTERING FROM THE STRESSES

THEY WON'T SUPPORT THE TANK!

I KNOW SIMON

I'M *COUNTING* ON THAT VERY THING

NO! NOT WHEN I'M SO CLOSE!

--CRASHING DOWN!

AND IT DOES

STEP OUT OF THE TANK MALCOLM!

YOUR OWN *HUBRIS* WILL BE THE DEATH OF YOU ONCE AND FOR ALL

THE ADDED WEIGHT WILL DO NOTHING BUT SEND YOU *AND* THE THINK TANK

DESPITE SIMON'S WARNINGS, THE HATCH SLAMS SHUT ON LIGHTBOURNE AND THE THINK TANK FINALLY WRENCHES FREE OF ITS MOORINGS

I ONCE ASKED SIMON WHY HE FELT COMPELLED TO HOIST SUCH AN UNWIELDY CONTRAPTION TO THE TOP OF THE RESIDENCE

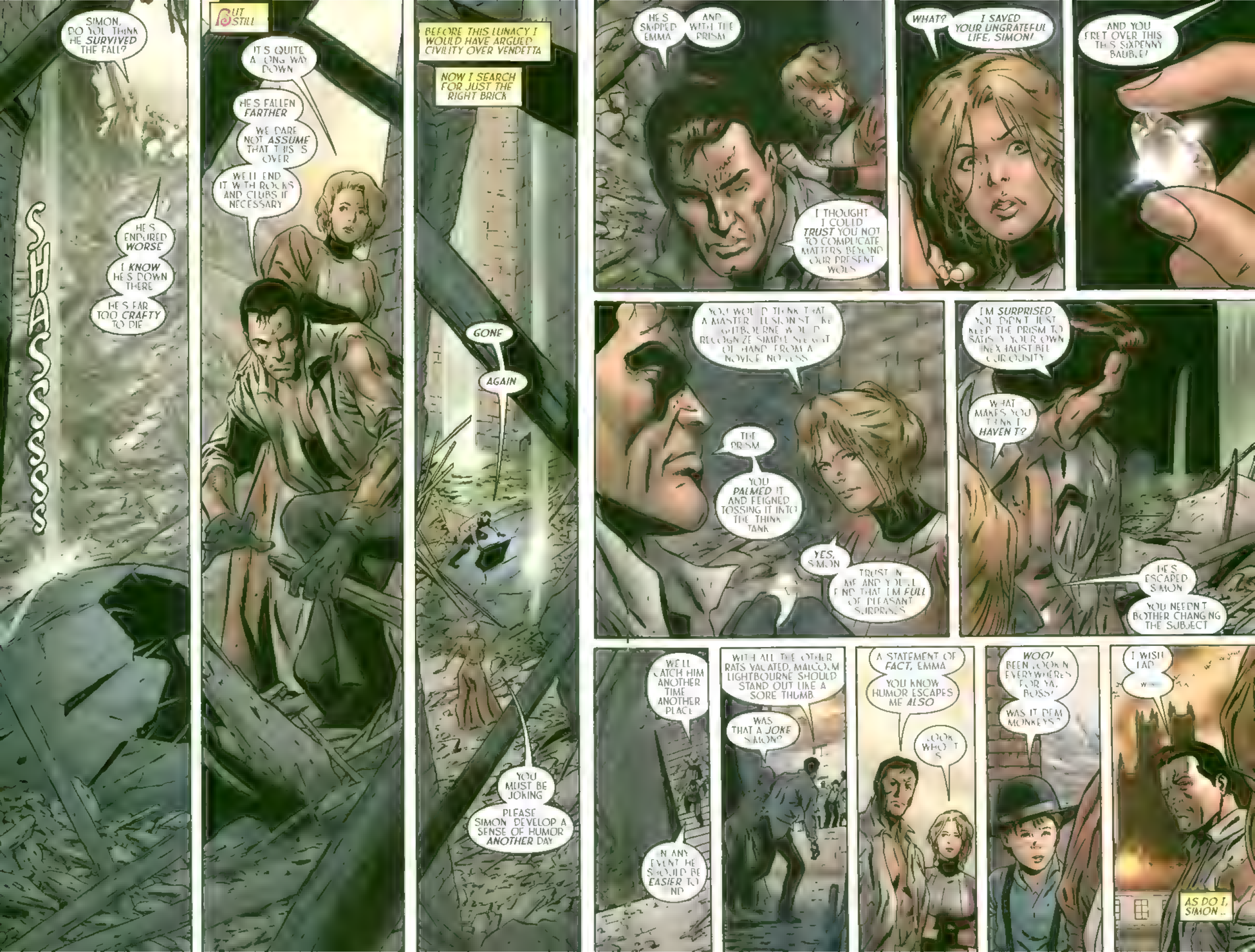
THINK OF THE DAMAGE IT WOULD CAUSE IF IT FELL

ALL THAT IRON BASHING AND BATTERING ITS WAY FROM TIER TO TIER TO TIER

DOWN DOWN DOWN

IRON

BANG


SIMON, DO YOU THINK HE SURVIVED THE FALL?
SHASSSSSSS
HE S ENDURED WORSE
I KNOW HE S DOWN THERE
HE S FAR TOO CRAFTY TO DIE
BUT STILL
IT S QUITE A LONG WAY DOWN
HE S FALLEN FARTHER
WE DARE NOT ASSUME THAT THIS S OVER
WE LL END IT WITH ROCKS AND CLUBS IF NECESSARY
BEFORE THIS LUNACY I WOULD HAVE ARGUED CIVILITY OVER VENDETTA
NOW I SEARCH FOR JUST THE RIGHT BRICK
GONE
AGAIN
YOU MUST BE JOKING
PLEASE SIMON DEVELOP A SENSE OF HUMOR ANOTHER DAY
HE S SKIPPED EMMA
AND WITH THE PRISM
I THOUGHT I COULD TRUST YOU NOT TO COMPLICATE MATTERS BEYOND OUR PRESENT WOES
WHAT?
I SAVED YOUR UNGRATEFUL LIFE, SIMON!
AND YOU FRET OVER THIS THIS SIXPENNY BAUBLE!
YOU WOULD THINK THAT A MASTER ILLUSIONIST LIKE LIGHTBOURNE WOULD RECOGNIZE SIMPLE SLEIGHT OF HAND FROM A NOVICE NO LESS
THE PRISM
YOU PALMED IT AND FEIGNED TOSSING IT INTO THE THINK TANK
YES, SIMON
TRUST IN ME AND YOU LL FIND THAT I M FULL OF PLEASANT SURPRISES
I M SURPRISED YOU DIDN T JUST KEEP THE PRISM TO SATISFY YOUR OWN INEXHAUSTIBLE CURIOSITY
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I HAVEN T?
HE S ESCAPED SIMON
YOU NEEDN T BOTHER CHANGING THE SUBJECT
WE LL CATCH HIM ANOTHER TIME ANOTHER PLACE
IN ANY EVENT HE SHOULD BE EASIER TO FIND
WITH ALL THE OTHER RATS VACATED, MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE SHOULD STAND OUT LIKE A SORE THUMB
WAS THAT A JOKE SIMON?
A STATEMENT OF FACT, EMMA
YOU KNOW HUMOR ESCAPES ME ALSO
LOOK WHO IT IS
WOO! BEEN LOOKIN EVERYWHERES FOR YA, BOSS!
WAS IT DEM MONKEYS?
I WISH I AD
AS DO I, SIMON ..

BUT DESPITE OUR AWKWARD LEVITY I FEAR WE HAVE LOOSED A MORE DEADLY BEAST

BLOOSH

GIRBLB!

GRIBLB!

BLRG?

I BELIEVE THIS CUDGEL IS WEIGHING YOU DOWN

DO GIVE MY REGARDS TO SIMON, WILL YOU?

NO! WHAT?

NO! YOU CAN'T!

STEADY AS SHE GOES, ANTAEUS

WE'VE QUITE A LONG JOURNEY AHEAD

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PARTINGTON RAZED!

OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

THE CITY'S FAVORITE SON, HIS MIND IS RAZOR-SHARP

EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY, HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

OBEDIAH JOY

A SALTY SCALAWAG IN LEAGUE WITH SCUTTLERS

SUBTERRANEAN STRIKE CRIPPLES CITY

Recent revelations have put to rest speculation regarding the causes and, to wit, possible repercussions following the disastrous seismic disturbances of Thursday last, already regarded in infamy among some circles as "Holey (sic) Thursday."

Partington's favorite son, Detective Simon Archard, reported to shaken Selectmen that the tremblers – which swallowed whole sections of city center – were, in fact, not geologic activity. Rather, the sinkholes that still perforate fair Partington were excavated by the nefarious Malcolm Lightbourne, who had diverted the city's own underground aquifer, channeling the potable water supply through elaborate sluices and gates to quite literally "undermine Partington for perceived wrongs committed against him," noted Archard.

City engineers continue to examine the machinations which caused a surprisingly small death toll when compared to the totality of damage befalling domiciles and the offices of this very publication ...PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

VILLAIN LIGHTS OUT

MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE ESCAPES

AFTER what was no doubt an epic battle within the flaming and crumbling confines of Detective Simon Archard's own residence, the murderous Malcolm Lightbourne somehow managed to evade capture by the master sleuth who was once his associate.

Although trapped inside an iron contraption described by Archard as a "sensory diversion sphere," Lightbourne apparently survived falling some thirty meters directly through Archard's cathedral home and into the sewer system opened up in the villain's artificially wrought tremors. When Archard's sphere was examined, Lightbourne had made good his getaway, leaving no clues behind

Though constables have combed the sewer tunnels yet navigable, Lightbourne has not been found. He is purported armed and exceedingly dangerous ...PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

CGE

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MISS EMMA BISHOP OF PARTINGTON LATELY PRONE TO DISASTER IS NO MORE

WHY IS IT THAT THE DRUIDS NAB ALL THE *PRETTY* ONES?

KLOP KLOP KLOP KLOP KLOP KLOP KLOP KLOP KLOP KLOP KLOP

AT ME SCHOOL THE EPIPHANICS RADIANT MOTHERS ALL HAD FACES LIKE OLD *SOWS*

WITH THE POX

WARTS AND MOLES, TOO

PERHAPS YOU SHOULD CHANGE *FAITHS*, GOOD SIR

I AM NOW *SERENITY*, UNDER-SISTER OF THE CULT *DRUIDICA*

AND WHILE MY BELIEF ESCHEWS MECHANIZATION FOR A MORE SPARTAN EXISTENCE I AM DISPOSED TO TRAVEL BY HORSEDRAWN CARRIAGE TO MY NEW POST--

--A WINDSWEPT SEAPORT THAT HAS SUFFERED ITS OWN SHARE OF *MISFORTUNE*

BALEEN, IS IT?

PLACE IS *CURSED*, IF YOU'RE ASKIN'

MOSTLY IF YOU'RE A *MARINER*..WHICH YOU *AIN'T*, I GUESS.

NO, DRIVER

I'M NOT MUCH FOR *WATER*

MY BELIEF IS IN THE LAND AND THE TREES

AND MINISTERING TO THE WIDOWS AND ORPHANS OF POOR CURSED BALEEN BEFORE THE GREAT RECKONING

OR DO YOU MEAN *WRECKING*, SISTER SERENITY?

FOR CENTURIES, MORE SHIPS HAVE BEEN LOST OFF BALEEN THAN IN ALL THE NAVAL BATTLES OF THE LAST GREAT WAR

TRIM THE TOPSAILS AND AIM FOR THE HARBOR LIGHTS!

OF LATE THE NUMBER HAS GROWN

CARGO VESSELS SHEERLY ALL FULLY LADEN WITH RICHES UNCOVERED IN THE EXCAVATIONS ONCE LED BY THE LATE TREASURE HUNTER CLIVE PENBERTHY

HEAVE TO, LADS!

HEAVE TO!

SOME SAYS IT'S A KRAKEN

A ROGUE SQUID DRAGGING VESSELS UNDER WITH VENGEFUL TENTACLES

PREPOSTEROUS

THE POORLY WRITTEN STUFF OF PENNY DREADFULS

THIS SMACKS OF MAN-MADE CATASTROPHE

THAT'LL BE BALEEN JUST UP THE BEACH *THERE*, SISTER

IT APPEARS THAT NOT EVERYONE BELIEVES IN A *CURSE*, DRIVER

THOSE SAILORS ARE PUTTING TO SEA, ARE THEY NOT?

SQUIDDERS?

NO, SISTER

THAT'D BE A *SALVAGE* CREW

Oh

THE MEN STRAIN THE WATERS FOR **ANYTHING** THAT MIGHT HAVE SURVIVED THE LATEST SHIPWRECK SAVE FOR THE DOOMED SCHOONER'S RETINUE.

AND THAT IS WHY I AM A SISTER OF MERCY, WHILE SIMON

SIMON--WHOEVER HE IS--WILL MEET ME AT HIS OWN PREDETERMINED TIME

PROUD KEEP'S NOT *FAR*, SISTER

TAKE YOU THE REST OF THE WAY IF'N YOU GIVE THE WORD

THAT'S QUITE FINE, DRIVER

I WOULD PREFER TO SEE THE TOWN AND PERHAPS QUENCH MY *THIRST* BEFORE BEGINNING MY DUTIES

SUIT YERSELF SQUIDDER'S TAVERN S[illegible]ST OVER *YONDER*

WOULD A DRUID PRIESTESS FIND HERSELF IN A BEER HOUSE?

I SHAN'T RISK COMPROMISING MY *MASQUERADE*

BUT ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH SIMON WOULD PUT ME MORE AT EASE WITH THESE **UNCERTAIN** SURROUNDINGS

COULD HE BE **HIDDEN** AMONG THESE ALE-SOAKED MIDSHIPMEN?

BEG PARDON, GOOD SIRS

BUT DOES THIS HUMBLE ESTABLISHMENT SERVE *MORE* THAN SPIRITS?

WHY WOULD ANYONE TRAVEL ALL THE WAY TO THIS SANDY SPECK FOR ANYTHING *OTHER?*

BEG PARDON?

ARE YOU BUYIN THE *FIRST* ROUND, LASS

OR SHOULD I DIG DEEP IN MY OWN POCKET FOR A PINT?

THEY TEACH YOU HOW TO SPIN STRAW INTO GOLD IN THE BLOCKHOUSE, OBED JOY?

OR WILL YE BE PUTTIN IT ON YER *UNPAID* TAB?

MY MONEY'S AS GOOD *NOW* AS THE PAY THEY SENT ME AWAY, JOHN NICKERSON

SO HOW ABOUT ONE OF YOU STRAPPIN LADS SET UP A COUPLE PINTS FOR ME AND THE HANDSOME GAL?

I'M *FLATTERED*, GOOD SIR

BUT DO YOU NOT RECOGNIZE THESE *VESTMENTS?*

SHOULD I?

THAT'S A *DRUIDESS*, OBED

YOU KNOW THEIR KIND DON'T HOLD WITH THAT

SHAME

JUST A PINT FOR *ME* THEN, BARKEEP

LADY D PREFER TO KEEP ER WITS ABOUT ER THEN

OH!

THAT'LL BE JUST *ENOUGH*, OBED

GOOD SIR, I MUST INSIST THAT YOU REMOVE YOUR HAND OR

OR *WHAT*, LASS?

OR YOU'LL BE AS MUCH A *BLASPHEMER* AS YOU ARE A *CONVICT* AND *CRIMINAL*, MASTER JOY

I PAID MY *PENANCE*, BROTHER

AND NOW I'M *BACK*

AND GROWN *WICKEDER* BY THE LOOKS OF T

THAT WILL *DO*, HENRY

TIME WILL REVEAL IF MASTER JOY HAS RETURNED TO US A *CHANGED* MAN

COME, SISTER LET US LEAVE THESE MEN TO THEIR SPIRITS

I'M SURE MASTER JOY HAS *MUCH* TO CATCH UP ON SINCE HIS RECENT *REHABILITATION*

I TRUST YOUR JOURNEY WAS WITHOUT *INCIDENT*, SISTER *SERENITY*, ISN'T IT?

FORMERLY *SARAH AINSLEY* BEFORE THE VOWS, BROTHER QUERCUS

--NAMED FOR THE *OAK*, AM I NOT CORRECT?

INDEED, SISTER SARAH BECOME-SERENE

STRONGEST OF WOOD AND A FINE TIMBER FOR SHIPBUILDING AS BEFITTING MY STATION HERE IN BALEEN

THIS IS A BEAUTIFUL MARE, BROTHER QUERCUS

YOURS AS LONG AS YOU ARE WITH US SISTER SERENITY

THOUGH I SHOULD WARN YOU THAT SHE HAS AN *INDEPENDENT* STREAK AND TENDS TO WANDER PAST HER OWN STABLES

SHE'LL DO *FINE*, BROTHER QUERCUS.

TELL ME IS THERE NO EPIPHANIC CHAPEL IN THESE PARTS?

FOR *WHAT*?

IS OUR DOCTRINE NOT *ENOUGH* FOR YOU, SISTER?

PERHAPS YOU *MISTAKE* MY MEANING / I MERELY FOUND IT *STRANGE* THAT THE EPIPHANY HAS NOT SHONE ITS LIGHT UPON THESE SHORES

PERHAPS... DRUIDICA IS THE BELIEF OF THE *HUMBLE*, SISTER SERENITY

THE EPIPHANIC CHURCH CARES LITTLE FOR THOSE WHO EKE OUT SO *PLAIN* AN EXISTENCE

OUR COFFERS ARE FILLED WITH *CHARITY*, NOT GOLD OR GEMSTONES

AND OUR TEMPLE OFFERS *LITTLE* IN THE WAY OF MATERIAL COMFORTS

WHAT *MORE* IS NEEDED, BROTHER QUERCUS?

IT IS IN *HARMONY* WITH THE LAND AND THE SEA

IS THAT NOT ONE OF THE FIVE *PRECEPTS*?

IT IS LIKELY THE MOST *IMPORTANT* OF ALL, SISTER

I APOLOGIZE IF MY MANNER TENDS TOWARD *INTERROGATION*

THE RELIGIOUS NEEDS OF BALEEN AND HER FOLK REQUIRE A *DEVOUT*

--NOT AN *IDEALIST*.

I'LL TIE OFF THE REINS

SUCH A COMPLEX KNOT YOU WEAVE, BROTHER

A LIFETIME AMONG MARINERS AND ONE *LEARNS* THEIR TRADE ALSO, SISTER

DOWN YOU GO JOY
MIND YER EAD ON THE BEAMS
S'DARK DOWN THERE
YOU OUGHT TO BE FAMILIAR TO THE GLOOM AFTER SO MANY YEARS IN REFORMATORY, OBED JOY
FASH
LET'S BRIGHTEN THINGS UP FOR YOU EH?
STIR YOUR MEMORIES, OBED?
LOOK ME IN THE EYES AND TELL ME TRUE
I SAY TO MYSELF NAH, JOHN POLLARD THIS ONE SWORE AN OATH ON A TAPER LIKE THIS
WHAT'S TO TROUBLE US?
AND I KEPT MY WORD
SEVEN YEARS AND NOT A PEEP
I'VE TOLD NO ONE ABOUT THE WRECKINGS
THAT'S LOYALTY, LADS
HE COULD HAVE GIVEN US ALL UP AND WALKED AWAY FROM LOCKUP IN HALF THE TIME BUT INSTEAD HE COMES HOME
AND FOR WHY, OBED?
FOR MY SHARE OF THE TAKE, POLLARD
I DIDN'T BARTER MY SILENCE FOR JUST CANDLEWAX AND FLOWERY WORDS
YOU OWE ME
ALL OF YOU WELL FED DOGS OWE ME
AYE I SUPPOSE WE DO
WANT TO SEE WHAT YOUR SILENCE HAS HELPED PRESERVE ALL THESE MANY YEARS, OBED?
AYE I'M DESERVIN OF THAT
ARE YE DAFT JOHN?
THAT CRUEL SOD WALKS INNA PUB STRAIGHT OUT OF LOCKUP AND YOU SHOW HIM OUR STASH?
THAT'S IT EXACTLY, HENRY
OBED'S GOT AS MUCH A STAKE IN THIS AS THE REST OF US
WHY NOT SHOW HIM HOW PROFITABLE WE'VE BEEN?
WHY NOT?
BUT START BY SHOWIN ME HOW MUCH O THE PROFIT IS MINE

THERE IS A PALL WHICH HANGS OVER BALEEN LIKE A SEA MIST

IT IS AS IF THE TOWN HAS LOST THE WILL TO LIVE

MORNINGS FIND THE FEW REMAINING SQUIDDERS ROWING OUT TO THE DEEP TRENCHES TO BEGIN THEIR HUNT

FOR A SAILING PORT, BALEEN IS TOO SHORT ON SAILORS

THE ABLE-BODIED WHO HAVEN'T LOST LIMBS TO HOOK OR HARPOON ..

.. WOULD RATHER STARVE THAN RISK PLYING THESE DANGEROUS WATERS.

ME OWN BROTHER WAS DASHED ONNA ROCKS, SISTER

I'LL NOT FOLLOW HIM TO BEING *BAIT* FOR THE KRAKENS

BUT WHAT INSPIRES SUCH FEAR?

HE'D KNOW BETTER THAN ANYBODY ELSE SISTER

OF COURSE

SINCE THE LAST WRECKING THE TEMPLE BELL OF BALEEN SOUNDS ALL TOO FREQUENTLY FOR A FUNERAL PROCESSION

AND OF ALL THE TRADES LEFT STRICKEN BY POVERTY, THE SINGLE PROFESSION FINDING BOUNTIFUL HARVEST HERE BELONGS TO THE **GRAVEDIGGER**

UNFORTUNATELY, HE PLANTS **MORE** THAN THE PEG-LEGGED FARMER SIFTING WORMY POTATOES FROM BALEEN'S SALT-FLECKED SOIL

PERHAPS THIS PLACE IS CURSED

EVEN **SIMON** MUST CONCEDE THE POSSIBILITY IN THAT, GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES

BUT MY INTREPID PARTNER, DISGUISED AS AM I, HAS YET TO MAKE HIS PRESENCE KNOWN

HE COULD BE ANYONE **ANYWHERE**

I TELL YOU HE'S *NOT* A WORRY

RIGHT NOW, I WORRY *MORE* THAT YOUR VOICE WILL CARRY ON THE WIND, POLLARD

WHO'S TO HEAR?

PERHAPS YOU'VE SEEN THE LOVELY *SISTER* NEWLY POSTED TO THESE HALLOWED GROUNDS?

WHY IS IT THAT ALL THE *PRETTY* ONES GO AND PROMISE THEMSELVES TO THE DRUIDS?

THE DRUIDS APPRECIATE NATURE'S BEAUTY IN *ALL* THINGS

AND *THERE'S* THE PITY

A PITY THAT YOU DO NOT TAKE THESE PEA, NUTS MORE *SERIOUSLY,* POLLARD

OUR EMPLOYER HAS SENT WORD OF ANOTHER SHIP TO BE SCUTTLED

SHE WOULD PREFER THAT THIS ONE LEAVE *LESS* EVIDENCE FLOATING ABOUT THE NEAP TIDE

WE DARE NOT CROSS HER IN THIS REGARD

SHE NEEDN'T DISTRESS WHOEVER *SHE'S*

YOU'RE BETTER OFF *NOT* KNOWING POLLARD

JUST PAY HEED TO THE CHARTS WILL YOU?

THE *SEAWITCH* IS INBOUND THIS VERY NIGHT

SHE'LL APPROACH FROM THE NORTH AND LET THE PREVAILING CURRENTS SWING HER DOWNSHORE TO BALEEN

THE *SEAWITCH* *CANNOT* REACH BALEEN

IS THAT ABUNDANTLY *CLEAR,* POLLARD?

THAT'S *WHAT* OUR EMPLOYER PAYS US FOR

IT COULDN'T BE *CLEARER*

NOW LET'S DISCUSS THAT *INQUISITIVE* LITTLE SISTER

THE BRINY MARSHES INLAND FROM BALEEN ARE A PLEASANT CALM BENEATH SKIES THREATENING TO TURN STORMY

I COULD LIKELY COVER MORE GROUND WITH THAT OLD ROAN MARE, BUT THE WALK WILL PROVIDE AMPLE TIME TO RECONSIDER THE FACTS OF THIS CASE

FACT NUMBER ONE

I APPEAR TO BE GOING IT ALONE

THREE DAYS IN AND SIMON STILL HAS NOT REVEALED HIMSELF

SHOULD I ASSUME THAT HE HAS BEEN DISCOVERED?

FACT NUMBER TWO

THE DENIZENS OF BALEEN SEEM EXCEEDINGLY DISTRUSTFUL OF OUTSIDERS

--EVEN ONE AS UNASSUMING AS A SISTER SERVANT OF THE DRUIDICA.

GOOD SIR?

"NATHAN" IS WHAT MY MOTHER NAMED ME

HELP YA SISTER?

I HAD NO IDEA THE FUNERARY GROUNDS WOULD BE SO *LARGE*

ARE THE *SEAS* TO BLAME FOR ALL THESE FRESH GRAVES, NATHAN?

NOT THE WATERS *THEMSELVES*, SISTER...THEY'VE GOT NO ILL WILL TO ANYONE

IF YA ASK ME THE HARBOR LIGHTS GOT *MORE* TO DO WITH THESE BOYS FILLIN UP THE HILL

THE *LIGHTS*?

COULD YOU EXPLAIN?

SOMETIMES THEY MOVE WHERE THEY *SHOULDN'T*.

CAN IT BE SO SIMPLE?

SABOTAGE

BUT BY WHOM AND TO WHAT END?

AND WHAT PROFIT IS THERE IN SUCH UNCOUNTABLE LOSS?

ARE YOU ANY CLOSER TO THE TRUTH THAN I AM, SIMON?

DO YOU KNOW THAT ONE OR MORE SHIPWRECKERS MAY ALREADY BE AMONG US IN BALEEN

HIDING IN THE SHADOWS?

GREAK

WHO'S THERE?

JUST LIS SISTER

THE NYMPHS OF THE WOODS

IKE IN THE GOOD SCROLLS

NOBODY BAD

STEP AWAY, LADS--

SHE IS A WOMAN OF THE FAITH, AFTER ALL

IT WOULDN'T DO TO HAVE YOU RISK DAMNATION BY SULLYING HER

UNLESS YOU'VE BEEN TO THE PT ALREADY, eh OBED?

HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE YOU'VE KNOWN THE SWEET CARESSES OF A WOMAN?

TOO LONG

SIMON?

YE TALKIN' TO ME, SISTER?

KLUF

SWAK

KICK ME

VERY WELL

BIF

GOOD SIR

A RIGHT *NASTY* ONE, SHE IS. FOR A *SISTER*

SHE'S *NO* DRUIDESS, LADS

TIME'S SHORT BIT HER

THAK

WE'VE GOT JUST ENOUGH TIME TO RID OURSELVES OF HER BEFORE THE *SEAWITCH* BREAKS HORIZON

WHAT

WHAT'LL WE DO WITH THE LYIN' *WENCH*, MISTER POLLARD

YOU USED TO CAL ME *JOHNNY*, OBED

I USED TO DO A LOT OF THINGS AFORE I WENT TO JAIL FOR *YOU*

AND YOU'RE *FREE* NOW, OR DO YOU NEED REMINDIN'?

WE'LL BURY HER DARK AND DEEP AND SEE IF YOU CAN STILL MAN A SKIFF LIKE THE OLD DAYS

WE AIN'T BURYIN' THE SISTER *ALIVE*, IS WE?

THAT'S *BLASPHEMING* IF I EVER HEARD SO!

GRAVEDIGGER NATHAN'S EVEN LEFT US AN EMPTY COFFIN, MISTER POLLARD

GOT ANY *LAST* WORDS FOR ER, JOY?

AYE

TURN YER BACKS, BOYS

GIVE OUR LOYAL SON A BIT O *PRIVACY* WITH THE LOVELY SISTER

SIMON

TOLL THE BELL EMMA

WHAT?

SIMON NO

I'M ALIVE

DON'T

CHUFF

CHUFF

BURY

CHUFF

OBEDIAH JOY
YOU ARE HEREBY RELEASED FROM THIS PENAL FACILITY YOUR TERM OF INCARCERATION COMPLETE
GO IN PEACE AND TROUBLE THE LAW NO FURTHER
OH I'M DONE WITH MAKING WAVES, WARDEN
I'LL BE HEADIN HOME TO BALEEN WHERE I'LL LOOK TO THE SEA
AND AWAIT THE DAY OF MY RECKONING

The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa

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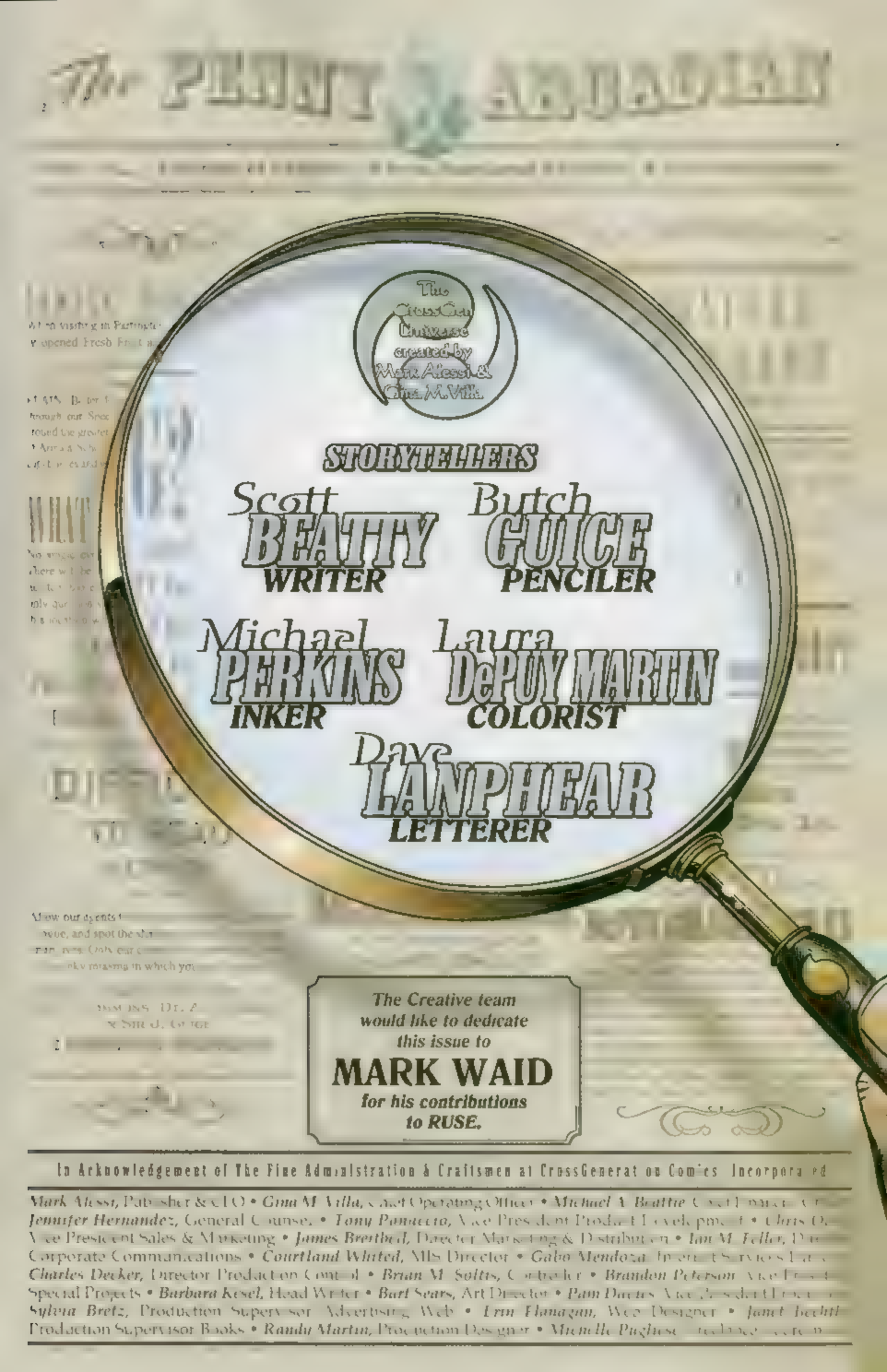

The Creative team would like to dedicate this issue to

MARK WAID

for his contributions to RUSE.

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The PENNY ARCADIAN

Copiously Illustrated — Afternoon Edition, Price One Penny

MONUMENTAL DISASTER

OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

THE CITY'S FAVORITE SON,
HIS MIND IS RAZOR-SHARP

EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY,
HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

JOHN POLLARD

A SINISTER SHIPWRECKER
IN LEAGUE WITH HIDDEN PARTIES

SIMON ARCHARD, FORTUNATE SON

EDITORIALISATION: A FORUM TO ORATE AND OPINE

BY P. RUFUS STRATHMORE, CITY SELECTMAN

SCARCELY A FORTNIGHT has transpired since the awfulness of "Holey Thursday" and Malcolm Lightbourne's dreadful attack upon our once lovely city. And though rebuilding continues apace, a goodly portion of Partington is pocked and pitted, our once firm foundations tentative to tread upon. Those among us who were not killed outright by crumbling mortar and crashing timbers are nonetheless plagued by chronic sleeplessness and a certain trepidation that larger calamity looms.

Given this grip of ennui, one begs the question why so many among Partington's politicos lobby so vociferously to honour "favorite son" Simon Archard for his efforts in routing Lightbourne and preventing further calumny. Archard's contributions to Partington are numerous. Criminality, it could be argued, exists only at the fringes of Partington because of Archard's direct intervention. To what depths of lawless depravity would Partington sink if not for Simon Archard? Ask Malcolm Lightbourne, wherever he may be.

Indeed, Archard's adversarial relationship with his vengeful former mentor is no state secret. Archard himself has been forthright in his admission that Lightbourne plotted Partington's ruin because the student had exceeded his master's fame, not to mention Archard's involvement in casting notice upon Lightbourne's clandestine criminal enterprises. Should I trace the causation further?

Proponents of this bronze idolatry of Simon Archard must ask themselves if Partington's "favorite son" is as much to blame for the city's calamity as was its unarguably evil engineer. What bitter irony that we celebrate a saviour who — albeit inadvertently — perhaps caused such calamity by placing Partington itself between this disastrous duel of wills with Lightbourne? •••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

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CGE

NOT MUCH TO *LOOK* AT IT, THIS PLACE

I HAVE HEARD TALK OF A *CURSE*

SHIPWRECKS AND SEA MONSTERS

NAY

JUST LONG DOWN ON 'ER LUCK, IS ALL

BALEENS ME *HOME*

LEAST IT *WAS* A LONG TIME AFORE

STEP UP THEN, TRAVELER

THAT'S NO WAY TO MAKE A *HOMECOMING*— PLODDING ALONE IN THIS FOUL SPATE.

I GIVE YOU *PASSAGE* AND YOU GIVE ME *COMPANY*—A FAIR TRADE, eh?

I'M OBLIGED, GYPSY

BUT YOU SHOULD BE *AWARES* THAT I'M JUST RELEASED FROM PENITENTIARY

DO YOU MEAN ME *HARM*, TRAVELER?

MAYHAP PLACE A CURSE ON *ME*?

NAY, GYPSY

I'M A *REFORMED* MAN

MY SINS ARE ALL DROWNED DARK AND DEEP

SAME AS BEFORE, LADS-- *THREE* TO A SKIFF

WE ROW OUT BEYOND THE BREAKERS TO DOUSE THE LIGHTS

AND THEN WE'LL WAIT FOR WHATEVER'S LEFT OF THE *SEAWITCH* TO COME BOBBIN IN AS *FLOTSAM* ON THE MORNING SURF

EASY PEASY WHAT SAY *YOU*, OBED?

SAME AS IT EVER WERE JOHN

BUT I THINK I'LL BE SITTIN THIS ONE OUT ON THE DOCKS

AND *WHY* PRAY TELL?

TOO MUCH ALE, JOHN

M'DRUNK

CAN *THIS* BE THE MAN WHO ONCE DOWNED TWENTY PINTS AND WALKED STEADY AND TRUE AFTERWARD WITH NARRY A CARE OR HANGOVER TO BOOT?

HAS PRISON MADE YOU *SOBER*, OBED OR JUST *SOFT?*

LOOK AT HIM LADS

SEVEN YEARS AGO AND I'D BE GATHERING MY TEETH OFF THE JETTY FOR A *GIRD* LIKE THAT

M'DRUNK, JOHN

GET IN THE BOAT, OBED

UNABLE TO GET ONE OF THE LADS *DROWNED* OR JUST RIGHTLY WATERLOGGED

WOULDN'T WANT THAT ON YER *CONSCIENCE*, JOHN POLLARD?

PRISON MADE YOU *PIOUS* TOO, OBED?

FIRST LIGHT IS ONLY A FEW HOURS OFF

IF WE DON'T POSITION THE LANTERNS SOON, THE *SEAWITCH* WON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO GUIDE HER

NOW GET IN THE BOAT, OBED

I WON'T ASK YOU AGAIN

IT'S HIGH TIME YOU REMEMBER *WHO* YOU ARE

AYE

AND [illegible]

SEE THAT YOU DON'T DISAPPOINT

SIMON ARCHARD, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME?

SKRIFWSH

EEEK!

GET OFF, YOU NASTY THING!

STEADY, EMMA

MERELY INSECTS

HARMLESS, REALLY

EVEN UPON YOUR FACE IN YOUR HAIR ELSEWHERE

OUCH!

...WITH ONLY A HANDFUL OF VOTIVE MATCHSTICKS IN MY POCKET TO WARD OFF THE PITCH BLACK OF THIS CRAMPED PINE BOX.

SKRIFWSH

AND A TINY BRASS BELL

LET'S NOT FORGET THAT, EMMA

OUCH!

TOLL THE BELL, EMMA.

AND DO WHAT, PRAY TELL?

SHALL I RING FOR TEA, SIMON?

OR WOULD YOU PREFER I COMPOSE A SEA SHANTY WHILE I WAIT FOR YOU TO COME BACK AND RAISE ME FROM THIS LONELY NECROPOLIS?

TOLL THE BELL, INDEED.

HAD YOU TRUSTED ME SUFFICIENTLY TO REVEAL YOUR DISGUISE EARLY ON, PERHAPS THEN I COULD HAVE SHARED THE SECRET OF THESE AWFUL WRECKINGS.

...OBED JOY. SIMON ONE AND THE SAME!

YOU CERTAINLY FOOLED ME AND EVERYONE ELSE IN BALEEN WITH YOUR ALTER EGO, A PARDONED CONVICT AS CRUEL AS THESE PITILESS SEAS.

BUT HOW ELSE WOULD YOU SECRETE YOUR SELF AMONG SUCH PIRATES?

HOW ELSE COULD YOU DESTROY THEM FROM WITHIN THEIR OWN RANKS?

HOW ELSE SHOULD YOU KNOW WHAT LAY BEYOND THE HARBOR LIGHTS?

BLUH!

TOLL THE BELL
DING
DING DING DING DING DING DING DING DING DING
WELL, THIS IS WORKING SPLENDIDLY
DING
OUCH
GET ME OUT OF HERE, SIMON!
SKRIFWSH
WAIT
SKRUNKK
PERHAPS I'M NOT TOLLING THE BELL *PROPERLY*
IS *THIS* WHAT YOU MEANT SIMON?
AM I TO *SCRATCH* AND *SCRAPE* MY WAY BACK FROM THE DEAD WITH THE KEEN EDGE OF THIS METAL CHIME?
SKRUNKK
OR SHALL I PATIENTLY AWAIT YOU TO LIBERATE ME FROM THE *AFTERLIFE*?
I'VE BUT A SINGLE MATCHSTICK LEFT.
ONCE IT IS SPENT, I'LL BE STUCK DOWN HERE IN THE EARTHEN DARK WITH THE SKITTERY THINGS AND MY OWN BURNT AND BLISTERED FINGERTIPS.
SKRIFWSH
AND THE AIR IS SO THIN, EMMA.
LET'S NOT FORGET THAT.
SKRUNKK SKRUNKK
OUCH
YOU'RE NOT COMING BACK, ARE YOU.
SKRUNK
SIMON?
ALIVE AND *MISTAKEN* OR RETURNED FROM THE DEAD PER NO GOOD
SISTER IZZAT *YOU*?
NATHAN!
ARE YA *ALRIGHT*, PRETESS?
NATHAN THERE'S PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME I NEED YOU TO FETCH THE CONSTABLE N BALEEN
AND LEAD HIM TO THE DOCK YARDS
ANOTHER SHIPWRECKING IS IN THE OFFING AND WE NEED TO PUT A STOP TO IT ONCE AND FOR ALL
WILL YOU LEND ME YOUR HORSE?
AYE, SISTER
I SUPPOSE N I WOULD
RUSTY'S FAST AND HE'S FAIR TEMPERED
NATHAN, TELL ME YOU HEARD THE *BELL*?
AYE
WHAT IT'S FOR
WHO BUT A *GRAVEDIGGER* WOULD KNOW SUCH A THING?
PROLY SOME ONE WHO'S BEEN *INTERRED* BEFORE SISTER
GIDDYAP, RUSTY!

I TRUST THAT SOMEONE PERCHES IN YOUR CROW'S NEST THIS NIGHT

SEAWITCH

LOOK *SHARP*, SAILOR

I'VE LIKELY ONE CHANCE AT SPARING YOU AND THE REST OF YOUR CREW A WATERY GRAVE.

BALEEN *HO*, CAP'N DICKERSON!

HARBOR LIGHTS RE

GONE?!

NOW THAT'S RIGHTLY *QUEER*

THE BUOY LANTERN'S *BLINKIN'* AT US, CAP'N!

FETCH ME MY SPYG'SS MISTER CHAUNCEY

CURSED BALEEN

WHAT IS IT CAPT'N?

THE OLD NAUTICAL CODE

WE'VE BEEN *WARNED OFF*

HARD TO STARBOARD, MEN!

TAKE HER BACK OUT TO DEEP WATER

THIS WAY'S NOTHING BUT *REEF* AND *RUIN*

THAT'S THE WAY *WITCH*

AIM FOR BALEEN BY THE BRIGHT OF DAY

NOT BY THESE DEAD LIGHTS

DEAD *RIGHT*, OBED JOY

TURNED THE BEACON INTO A SIGNAL LAMP DID YOU?

JOY'S A B*LOODY* TRA*TOR*, JOHN!

WHACKED US BOTH HARD WITH AN OAR, HE DID!

APPARENTLY NOT HARD *ENOUGH*

WHAT SAY WE GO FOR A *ROW*, OBED?

I UNDERSTAND IF I PREFER DONAL HERE TO MAN THE *OARS*.

FOOL ME *ONCE* AND ALL THAT

FORGIVE ME, RUSTY

BUT I SHAN'T ATTEMPT THIS SHADOWY BRIDGE AND ITS HIDDEN PERILS A SECOND TIME!

FLY, RUSTY!

GOOD HORSE

YOU'VE DONE YOUR PART

NOW CATCH YOUR BREATH AND TREAD LIGHTLY

IF WE ARE STEALTHY ENOUGH, PERHAPS WE CAN CATCH THE WRECKERS' MASTER UNAWARES

DO COME IN, MY DEAR

YOUR OFFENSES ARE REVEALED, BROTHER QUERCUS

SISTER SERENITY IF THAT IS TRULY YOUR NAME

IT IS BOTH IMPOLITE AND ALL THE MORE UNSEEMLY FOR A DRUIDESS TO ENTER A CHASTE BROTHER'S HUMBLE QUARTERS

AM I TO ASSUME THAT DRUIDICA NOW EMBRACES THE MATERIAL COMFORTS

OR IS THAT CHEST OF GOLD A CHARITABLE COLLECTION TAKEN UP FOR THE WRETCHED POOR OF CURSED BALEEN?

YOUR EXPERT KNOTS BETRAY YOU BROTHER

ONLY A MAN OF THE SEA WOULD CINCH A HORSE'S TETHER OR SACK OF ILL-GOTTEN JEWELS SO SECURELY

CONVICT

YOU CAN HAVE HER AND THE JEWELS!

UNH!

CONVICT?

SIMON?!

WELL, IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU RETURNED

I WAS BEGINNING TO BELIEVE YOU HAD ABANDONED ME TO THESE CUTTHROATS

DON'T WANT ONE OR T'OTHER PRIEST

VERY WELL

PERHAPS THEN YOU CAN HELP ME KILL HER PROPER

POLLARD DIDN'T BOTHER TO BURY THE MEDDLING HARLOT DEEP ENOUGH

NAY

I'VE COME HOME TO PUT AN END TO THE WRECKIN' AND KILL'N QUERCUS THEN BALEEN'S CURSE WAS LIFTED

WELL PUT, SIMON

NO

BALEEN'S DAMNATION AND OUR PROFIT OF IT WILL ENDURE

BY SACRIFICE IF NECESSARY

SIMON, PERHAPS IT'S TIME TO END THIS CHARADE

DUNNO WHY Y'KEEP CALL'NG ME THAT SISTER

M'NAME'S OBED

OBED JOY

I SHOULD SLIT YER LYN *THROAT* FOR WHUT YOU DONE TO YER LADS!

POCKET THAT *SHANK*, HENRY

MARITIME LAW SAYS A MUT NEER MERITS A PLANK OR THE GALLOWS

WHAT SAY WE STRETCH OBED'S GRIZZLED NECK INSTEAD?

OR DO YOU PLAN ON DEFYIN *ME* AS WELL?

TWO CAN HANG EASY AS ONE

N NO JOHN

JUST SEEMED QUICKER'N HE DESERVES FOR SCUTTLIN OUR *SCUTTLIN'*

YOUR GREED HAS MADE YOU *CARELESS*, GENTLEMEN

CUT ME DOWN AND LET'S DISCUSS HOW YOU MIGHT *EXTRICATE* YOURSELVES FROM FURTHER FOLLY

SHUT IT, TRAITOR

OR YOU'LL SWAY BLOODY AND SKINNED

TAKE UP *READIN* IN THE STOCKADE, OBED JOY?

THEY'S *BIG* WORDS PEELIN OFF YER TONGUE

PEELING"? "*SKINNED*"?

ENTIRELY *APPROPRIATE* DESCRIPTIONS

LOOKIT!

HE CARRIES THE *POX!*

LEND A HAND, JOHN POLLARD?

WHAT *TRICKERY* IS THIS?

THAT'S IT, PEEL IT AWAY HAIR AND ALL

YOU'RE LOOKING A BIT *GREEN* AT THE GILLS, JOHN

IT'S MERELY THE *ARTIFICE* OF SKIN

A RESIN OF RUBBER ACTUALLY

YOU'RE *NOT* OBED JOY

OBVIOUSLY

WHO IS HE THEN, JOHN?
A SPY
A SPY? FOR WHO?
A SPY FOR YOUR VERY OWN EMPLOYER
YOUR DISPLEASED EMPLOYER, JOHN POLLARD
IT'S AS I SAID BEFORE YOUR GREED EXCEEDS YOUR COMMON SENSE
I WAGER YOU BLUFF TO SAVE THE REST OF YOUR SKIN, SPY
DO I?
THE SHIPS WERE TO BE SUNK NOT PLUNDERED FOR THEIR BOUNTY POLLARD
THE GEMSTONES AND EXOTIC COINAGE FROM YOUR UNAUTHORIZED SALVAGINGS HAVE BEEN FOUND TRADED ALL THE WAY TO PARTINGTON
THIS QUITE NATURALLY HAS ATTRACTED THE ATTENTIONS OF THE CITY'S MASTER DETECTIVE SIMON ARCHARD
WHO IS SURE TO ARRIVE SOON ENOUGH WITH THE LAW IN TOW TO END BALEEN'S LONG AND UNFORTUNATE RUN OF SHIPWRECKINGS
SIMON ARCHARD
YES SCOURGE OF MISCREANTS AND MALEFACTORS
HE COULD VERY WELL BE IN OUR BURST AS I SPEAK
NOT BLOODY LIKELY
WE'D KNOW IF HIGHBROW STRANGERS LIKE THAT PONCY SLEUTH LURKED ABOUT
OF COURSE NOTHING ESCAPES YOUR NOTICE
BUT OUR EMPLOYER NONETHELESS BLAMES YOU AND YOUR SECRET ACCOMPLICE FOR BRINGING UNDUE SCRUTINY UPON US ALL
I ONLY DID WHAT THE PRIEST TOLD ME TO DO, SPY
CONSIDER IT HAZARD PAY
PURE PROFIT BENEATH HER NEED OR NOTICE AND JUSTLY EARNED FOR THE RISKS WE'VE TAKEN
IT'S AS MUCH BLOOD MONEY, POLLARD
OR DO YOU AND YOUR PRIEST RECKON OTHERWISE?
SOIL YOUR HANDS UPON US AND YOU'LL HAVE MUCH MORE EXPLANATION FOR THE CONSTABLES, BROTHER QUERCUS
ARE YOU SO NAIVE TO THINK THAT I CAME TO BALEEN ALONE?
COME UP SISTER!
BAH
THERE HAVE BEEN NO OTHER STRANGERS TO TOWN SAVE FOR YOU, IMPOSTER
ANOTHER HAS INFILTRATED THIS FOUL ENTERPRISE, BROTHER
HE HIDES IN PLAIN SIGHT AND WILL SEE YOU IN LEG IRONS BEFORE THE DAY'S THROUGH
THEY WON'T ARREST A MAN OF FAITH, FAIR SISTER
ASK HIM
AYE, BROTHER
THERE WAS A TIME LONG BACK WHEN I'D'VE KEPT COUNSEL FOR THE LIKES O'YOU
BUT IT'S RIGHTLY HARD TO BE TRUE TO TH' LAND AND SEA AND ALL THE COMMANDMENTS OF DRUID WHEN YOU'RE LEFT TO ROT DOWN IN TH' DEEP DARK FOR SEVEN YEARS GONE

BLASPHEMER!

SAYS THE POT TO THE KETTLE

SIMON OBED

OBED SIMON

BOTH OF YOU HAVE BOXED ME INTO A CRAMPED CORNER ONCE MORE WITH LITTLE HOPE OF ESCAPE

UNLESS

TOLL THE BELL

IS THIS WHAT YOU MEANT SIMON?

SUICIDE, SISTER?

THAT'S NOT THE WAY OF DRUIDICA

BONG

BE

BONG

STILL

BONG

DAMN YOU!

BONG

I PRAY THAT THIS TOLLING IS NOT MERELY MY DEATH KNELL, SIMON

BONG BONG

THE DRUID CARILLON!

LOOK THERE! THE TOWN-FOLK!

THEY HEARD IT ALL!

ARCHARD AND THE CONSTABLES ARE ON US JOHN!

NO IT AIN'T BE

ARREST THE LOT OF 'EM LADS!

DO IT FOR YOUR DROWNED SONS AND BROTHERS AND FATHERS!

SIMON ARCHARD ISN'T COMING TO THIS CHUM CROKED SPECK!

ACTUALLY POLLARD

HE'S ALREADY HERE

YOU'RE ARCHARD?

THE PONCY SLEUTH?

SCOURGE OF MISCREANTS AND MALEFACTORS?

LET ME GO AND YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL! EVERY LAST JEWEL AND DOUBLOON

THE BARONESS NEEDN'T KNOW!

BARONESS?

YES! THE BARONESS MIRANDA CROSS!

WHO ELSE?!

BONG

HOW LONG CAN YOU *DANGLE* BEFORE YOUR TENDER ARMS TIRE?

I'VE KEPT THE WRECKINGS SECRET A *LONG* TIME

I'M A *PATIENT* MAN, SISTER

SOM I, BROTHER!

OF!

REACH FOR ME *HAND*, SISTER!

I'LL DRAG HER DOWN *WITH* ME, OBED JOY!

NO

YOU *WON'T*

DID YOU NOT PREACH THAT "DRUIDICA IS THE BELIEF OF THE *HUMBLE* BROTHER QUERCUS?

A DRUIDESS' ROBES ARE HUMBLE, *INDEED*, SPUN FROM THE SIMPLEST CLOTH

AND ESPECIALLY *THREADBARE* AFTER THE SLASHING AND SLICINGS FROM YOUR CEREMONIAL BLADE

SHRIP

SPARE ME

SPARE ME EEEEEEEEE!

SHLUK

GOT YOU, SISTER

YOU MUST HELP ME TO *UNDERSTAND*, SIR

IF YOU'RE THE *REAL* OBED JOY.

THEN *WHERE* IS SIMON?

AND WHAT FACE *DOES* HE WEAR?

THE BARONESS!

TELL ME *WHERE* TO FIND HER!

I VALUE MY LIFE MORE THAN *THAT*, ARCHARD!

POLLARD, *NO!*

THE SWELL!

YOU'LL BE DASHED TO PIECES!

WHAT IS THIS *HOLD* YOU HAVE, MIRANDA?

ANOTHER *NOOSE*, LADS!

WE'LL NOT REST UNTIL EVERY LAST ONE OF 'EM HANGS HIGH!

SNAK!

THE *SEAWITCH* S JUST MAKING PORT

SAFE AND SOUND

BALEEN IS CURSED NO MORE, MISS BISHOP

AND SIMON ARCHARD RIDES INTO THE SETTING SUN *WITHOUT* CLAIMING HIS SHARE OF THE GRATEFUL ACCOLADES

IRONIC THAT *TWO* OBED JOYS BROUGHT THIS CASE TO A CLOSE

ONLY THAT ONE JOY WAS PARDONED *EARLY* FOR MODEL BEHAVIOR INCLUDING HIS CONFESSION TO THE WRECKINGS CULPRITS

BUT *JUSTICE* WAS DONE NONETHELESS

AND AN IMPRISONED MAN FOUND REDEMPTION FOR HIS PAST MISDEEDS

SO YOU BELIEVE IN *FORGIVENESS*, SIMON?

REHABILITATION, EMMA

THE TRUST THAT WHEN FACED WITH TWO DIVERGING ROADS A MAN WILL ULTIMATELY CHOOSE THE *GOOD* PATH

WHY, SIMON

DOES A MUNIFICENT SOUL PEEK OUT FROM *BENEATH* THAT VEIL OF RUBBER RESIN?

A *SOUL*, YOU SAY?

SWAK

NEIGHHH!

NEVER MIND

ALL THAT REMAINS BEHIND THIS MASQUERADE AND FAKERY IS YOUR PREVAILING PINCHED EXPRESSION

SLOW, GIRL!

SLOW!

AND THE LESSER EVILS OF OBED JOY

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The PENNY ARCADIAN

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Afternoon Edition, Price One Penny

ARCHARD SCUTTLES SHIP-WRECKERS

EMBARKS ON NEXT CASE TODAY

OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

THE CITY'S FAVORITE SON, HIS MIND IS RAZOR-SHARP

EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY, HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

OBEDIAH JOY

A SALTY SCALAWAG IN LEAGUE WITH SCUTTLERS

In recent days, many in our stricken city have openly lamented the absence of Partington's most famous detective, Simon Archard. Tuesday, the mystery of his whereabouts was at last laid to rest as Archard returned home from the tiny shipping port of Baleen. Often regarded as a cursed harbor, Baleen's sole claim to fame was the inordinately high number of sea vessels that met their end on the rocky shoals girding that storm-tossed coast. The *Penny Arcadian* is pleased to report an end to this supposed curse as Archard brought to light the gang of thieves and cutthroats responsible for deliberately wrecking scores of ships thought to have succumbed to foul weather and misguided seamanship.

While Archard himself busily readies for yet another excursion beyond the confines of our slowly rebuilding metropolis, his winsome assistant, Emma Bishop, provided the *Arcadian* with some details on the diabolical caper. It seems the Wreckers of Baleen were led by one John Pollard, who was in league with the town's master of Druidica, one Brother Quercus. Both gentlemen met their demise fleeing from Archard. The rest of the Wreckers shall shortly be joining their bosses, courtesy of the Baleen gallows.

One note of passing interest is that some measure of Archard's success against the maritime malefactors may be attributed to Obediah Joy, a recently paroled felon who returned to Baleen just in time to assist Partington's favorite son. Those pundits who trumpet the rehabilitative potential of incarceration may find a ready example in the tall and rise of Obed Joy.

ARCHARD AND ASSISTANT RETURN TO PARTINGTON

While the *Penny Arcadian* staff recognize that safe shipping in far-off ports can have a direct effect on commerce in Partington, there are still those who question Archard's heavy travel itinerary during our city's hour of need. We are barely recovered from the sabotage wrought by Archard's former partner, Malcolm Lightbourne, and yet Archard would leave the city that depends upon his protection to fend for itself? The *Arcadian* tried to reach the dauntless detective for comment on this matter, but, as alluded to above, he was otherwise engaged preparing for yet another expedition •••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

01511

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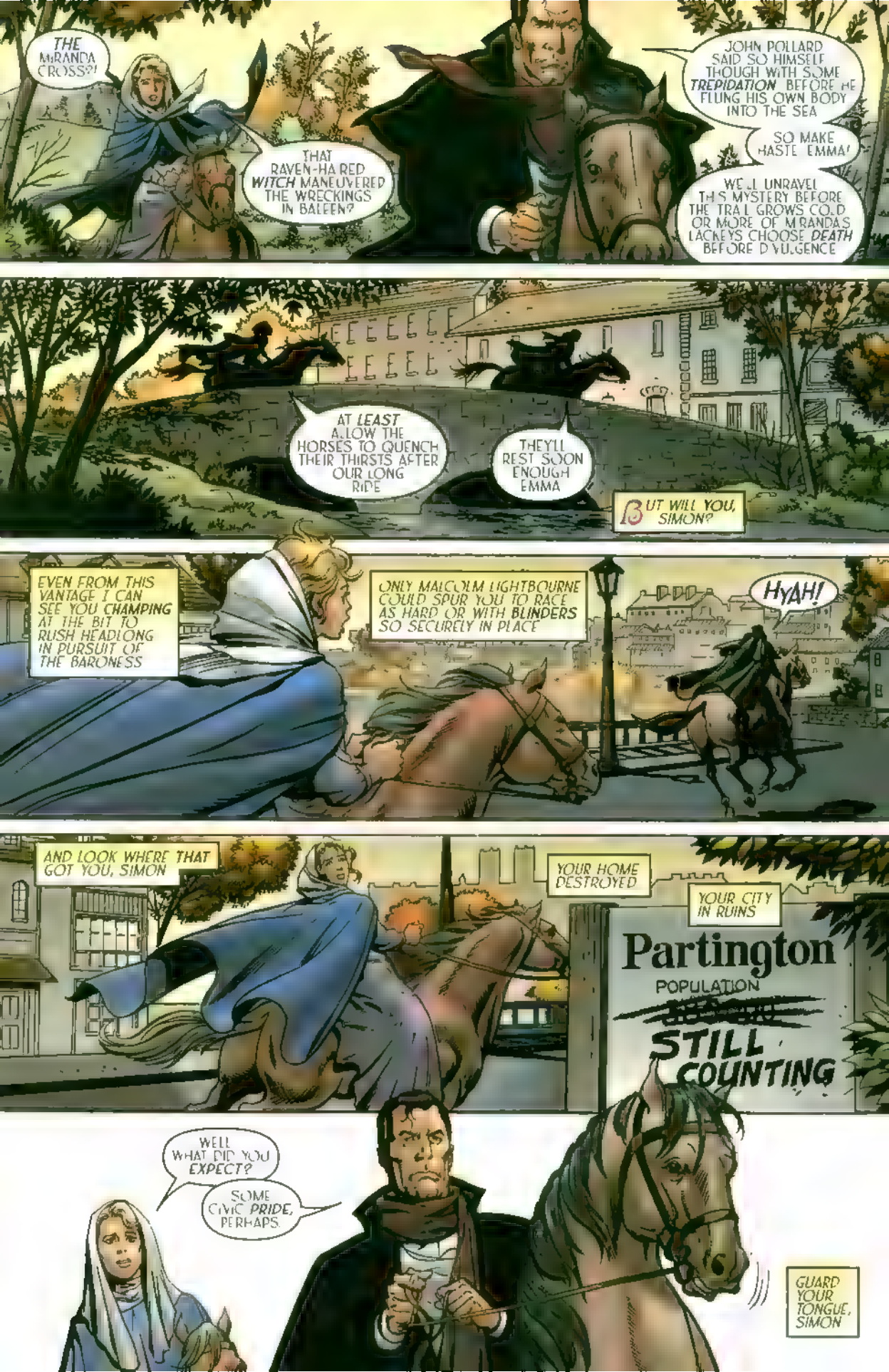

THE MIRANDA CROSS?!
THAT RAVEN-HAIRED WITCH MANEUVERED THE WRECKINGS IN BALEEN?
JOHN POLLARD SAID SO HIMSELF THOUGH WITH SOME TREPIDATION BEFORE HE FLUNG HIS OWN BODY INTO THE SEA
SO MAKE HASTE EMMA!
WE'LL UNRAVEL THIS MYSTERY BEFORE THE TRAIL GROWS COLD OR MORE OF MIRANDA'S LACKEYS CHOOSE DEATH BEFORE DIVULGENCE
AT LEAST ALLOW THE HORSES TO QUENCH THEIR THIRSTS AFTER OUR LONG RIDE
THEY'LL REST SOON ENOUGH EMMA
BUT WILL YOU, SIMON?
EVEN FROM THIS VANTAGE I CAN SEE YOU CHAMPING AT THE BIT TO RUSH HEADLONG IN PURSUIT OF THE BARONESS
ONLY MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE COULD SPUR YOU TO RACE AS HARD OR WITH BLINDERS SO SECURELY IN PLACE
HYAH!
AND LOOK WHERE THAT GOT YOU, SIMON
YOUR HOME DESTROYED
YOUR CITY IN RUINS
Partington
POPULATION
STILL COUNTING
WELL WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?
SOME CIVIC PRIDE, PERHAPS
GUARD YOUR TONGUE, SIMON

ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, PARTINGTON LOOKS BETTER THAN WHEN WE DEPARTED HER TO ROUT THE WRECKERS OF BALEEN

AT LEAST HERE THE SUN IS SHINING.

ALL THE BETTER TO SEE THE BLIGHT LIGHTBOURNE LEFT WITH US

YOU EXPECTED THE REBUILDING TO *CONCLUDE* IN OUR SHORT TIME AWAY SIMON?

OR DO YOU ACCUSE OUR FELLOW CITIZENS OF *SLOTH?*

YOU CAN RETIRE BOTH YOUR VESTMENTS *AND* JUDGMENTS SISTER EMMA

I WONDER AT WHO *PROFITS* FROM MALCOLM'S ATTACK

BEYOND THAT GAGGLE OF RAT FATTENED GARGOYLES, OF COURSE

BUT WHAT TROUBLES ME *MORE* IS WHY MIRANDA WOULD GO TO SO MUCH TROUBLE TO HAVE ALL THOSE SHIPS BOUND FOR BALEEN SCUTTLED

WHAT PROFIT IS THERE IN *DISASTER?*

RURP!

SALVAGE, PERHAPS?

BROTHER QUERCUS CERTAINLY *ABSTAINED* FROM HIS VOW OF POVERTY TO LINE THE POCKETS OF HIS ROBES WITH PRECIOUS METALS AND RARE GEMSTONES

MANGY DOG-NICKED MEATS!

SALVAGE IS AS GOOD A REASON AS *ANY,* EMMA

BUT POLLARD AND HIS MOTLEY CREW WERE APPARENTLY *VIOLATING* MIRANDA'S EXPLICIT DIRECTIVES BY PIRATING THOSE WRECKS.

STILL, FORTUNE FAVORS THE *INDUSTRIOUS,* OR AT LEAST THOSE SO VERY WILLING TO *ADAPT* TO ADVERSITY.

IGHTBOURNE'S LAIR
TOUR THE CRIMESMITH'S CAVE!
FIVE PENCE ONLY!

SEE PARTINGT CATACO Y!

PARTINGTON'S CITIZENRY ARE A *STOUT* LOT, SIMON.

YOU SHOULDN'T *CONDEMN* THEM FOR REFUSING TO WALLOW IN MISERY

I AM MERELY TAKING NOTE OF THE *NEW ECONOMY*, EMMA

WE *WERE* TALKING ABOUT PROFIT AND DISASTER

BUY A BOOK, GUV?

YE LOOK LIKE A MAN WHUT *READS*

AND I WOULD WAGER THAT YOU DO *NOT* IF THE APPEARANCE

--OR THE *STENCH* OF THOSE MILDEW-BLOATED TOMES IS ANY CLUE TO THEIR PREVIOUS CARE

JACKSON LIVE

LIKELY YOU SMELL *THAT*, SIMON

WHAT SAY WE *STABLE* THESE HARD RIDDEN STEEDS AND PROVIDE THEM WITH THE DRINK YOU PROMISED?

OR WOULD YOU PREFER TO LINGER FOR A BIT OF *SHOPPING*?

SUCH A WASTE OF FINE PARCHMENT

JACK

ARE YOU QUITE CERTAIN YOU'VE REMOVED ALL TRACES OF OBED JOY'S DISGUISE?

FROM THAT FROWNING COUNTENANCE, YOU LOOK AND ACT AS IF OUR JOURNEY HOME WAS IN *VAIN*

PERHAPS IT *WAS*

IF THE REPAIRS TO THE RESIDENCE HAVE COMMENCED AS SLOWLY AS WORK TO RESTORE THE REST OF THE CITY WE MAY AS WELL HAVE SECURED A CHANGE OF SUNDRIES AND BOOKED FURTHER PASSAGE IN BALEEN

TO BE FRANK THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE MORE EXPEDITIOUS ROUTE

HMM

UNLESS

YOU'RE JUST A TRIFLE *HOMESICK*?

I SUFFER FROM NO SUCH *MALADY*, MISS BISHOP

AND HOW ARE YOU AT AMUSEMENT THRILLS?

DIG *DEEP* N DEM POCKETS LADS AND LADIES!

BUT BE WARNED

FAWUNKA

LYTBORN'S LAST RYDE A PENNY PER PERIL

DIS TUMBLE AIN'T FOR DA FAINT OF

HEY BOSS

CECIL

CARE TO *EXPLAIN* THIS BIT OF BUSINESS?

I WUZ

RUN ALONG CHILDREN

NO MORE RIDES TODAY

AWWW!

AND *YOU*, MY YOUNG *ENTREPRENEUR*

W'L, DA BOSS BE NEEDIN A *CUT* OF DA TAKE, MIZ EMMA?

CONSIDER IT PAYMENT IN FULL FOR KEEPING VIGIL OVER THE RESIDENCE. CECIL

DIN'T DO *MUCH*

DAT BEARDED MAAM SAID I BEST STAY OUTDOORS AND OUT OF TROUBLE

DO TELL

AND FROM WHAT SORT OF *"TROUBLE"* ARE YOU SHIELDING THIS IMPRESSIONABLE LAD, MISTRESS PRESSMONK?

SIMON! YOU'VE *RETURNED!*

LADYBIRD NELL AND I WERE JUST TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE *RENOVATIONS*

JUST HOW *MANY* OF PARTINGTON'S CRAFTSMEN AND LABORERS ARE CURRENTLY IN MY *EMPLOY*, OPHELIA?

AND WHO SELECTED SUCH *FLORID* CARVINGS FOR THE WOODWORK?

SO MANY QUESTIONS FOR SUCH A RENOWNED SLEUTH!

SIMON ARCHARD, THIS COLD CHANCEL DESPERATELY NEEDED A *WOMAN'S* TOUCH

SAYS HALF A WOMAN WITH HALF A BEARD

SHOO, LADY! OUT WITH YOU!

I'M CURIOUS AS TO THE *INCENTIVE* FUELING THESE HAPPY WORKERS, NELL

SIMON MUST BE *DOUBLING* THEIR WAGES TO INSPIRE SUCH A BUZZ OF ACTIVITY

LIVE TO WORK WORK TO LIVE

AND WHAT'S *WRONG* WITH A SPLASH OF COLOR?

IT DEPENDS ON YOUR DEFINITION OF THE TERM--

--AND WHETHER YOU MEAN THE *AMOUNT* OF PAINT COATING MY WALLS OR THE *METHOD* OF ITS APPLICATION

WILL YOU *EXCUSE* ME FROM THE GRAND TOUR, NELL?

I WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO RETIRE TO MY OWN CHAMBERS AND REFRESH A BIT

HAVE AT IT, MISS EMMA

DRESSED MENS AWAIT YOU

NO NO NO AND *NO*

THIS IS ALL *WRONG*

THE STACKS AREN'T NEARLY HIGH ENOUGH AND THE SHELVINGS ARE CERTAINLY TOO CLOSE TOGETHER NOT TO MENTION TOO FEW IN NUMBER FOR THE MANY VOLUMES IN MY ARCHIVES

APOLOGIES, MISTER ARCHARD

NO, THIS WON'T DO AT ALL

SAVE YOUR APOLOGIES AND TEAR IT DOWN

YOU'LL HAVE TO START FROM *SCRATCH*

NOT A WORRY MISTER ARCHARD

OPHELIA

WHERE ARE MY BOOKS? THE CODICES? THE HAND PRINTED FOLIOS?

RIGHT *THERE*, SIMON

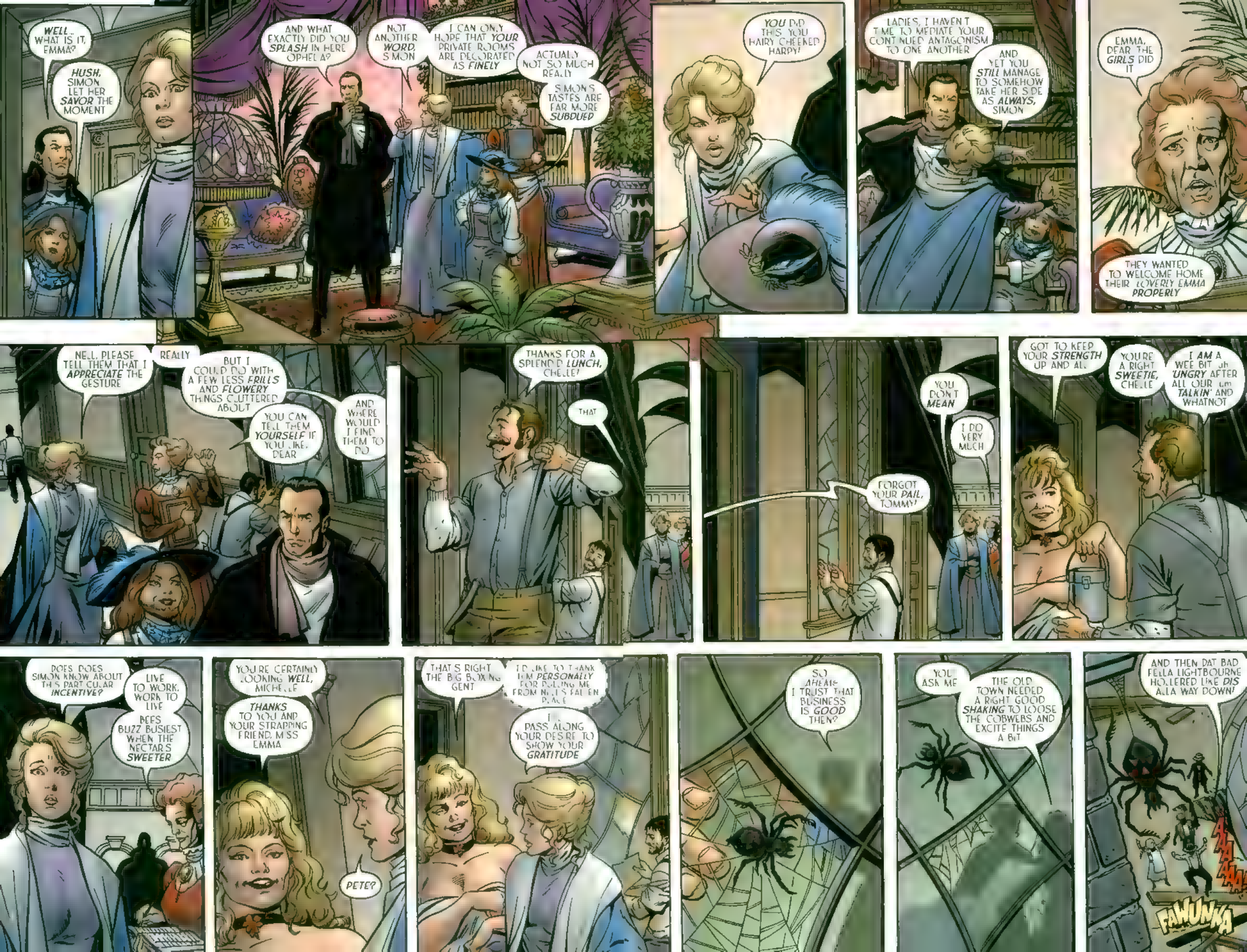
I'M AFRAID THAT'S ALL WE COULD FIND AFTER YOUR LIBRARY COLLAPSED INTO THE SEWERS

ALL YOU COULD FIND?

SIMON!

WHAT NOW?

I BELIEVE YOUR *ASSISTANT* HAS DISCOVERED HER *SUMPTUOUS* NEW QUARTERS


WELL... WHAT IS IT, EMMA?
HUSH, SIMON LET HER SAVOR THE MOMENT
AND WHAT EXACTLY DID YOU SPLASH IN HERE OPHELIA?
NOT ANOTHER WORD, SIMON
I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT YOUR PRIVATE ROOMS ARE DECORATED AS FINELY
ACTUALLY NOT SO MUCH REALLY
SIMON'S TASTES ARE FAR MORE SUBDUED
YOU DID THIS YOU HAIRY CHEEKED HARPY!
LADIES, I HAVEN'T TIME TO MEDIATE YOUR CONTINUED ANTAGONISM TO ONE ANOTHER
AND YET YOU STILL MANAGE TO SOMEHOW TAKE HER SIDE AS ALWAYS, SIMON
EMMA, DEAR THE GIRLS DID IT
THEY WANTED TO WELCOME HOME THEIR LOVERLY EMMA PROPERLY
NELL, PLEASE TELL THEM THAT I APPRECIATE THE GESTURE
REALLY
BUT I COULD DO WITH A FEW LESS FRILLS AND FLOWERY THINGS CLUTTERED ABOUT
YOU CAN TELL THEM YOURSELF IF YOU LIKE, DEAR
AND WHERE WOULD I FIND THEM TO DO
THANKS FOR A SPLENDID LUNCH, CHELLE!
THAT
YOU DON'T MEAN
I DO VERY MUCH
FORGOT YOUR PAIL, TOMMY!
GOT TO KEEP YOUR STRENGTH UP AND ALL
YOU'RE A RIGHT SWEETIE, CHELLE
I AM A WEE BIT uh 'UNGRY AFTER ALL OUR um TALKIN' AND WHATNOT
DOES DOES SIMON KNOW ABOUT THIS PARTICULAR INCENTIVE?
LIVE TO WORK, WORK TO LIVE
BEES BUZZ BUSIEST WHEN THE NECTAR'S SWEETER
YOU'RE CERTAINLY LOOKING WELL, MICHELLE
THANKS TO YOU AND YOUR STRAPPING FRIEND, MISS EMMA
PETE?
THAT'S RIGHT THE BIG BOXING GENT
I'D LIKE TO THANK HIM PERSONALLY FOR PULLING ME FROM NELL'S FALLEN PLACE
I'LL PASS ALONG YOUR DESIRE TO SHOW YOUR GRATITUDE
SO AHEM- I TRUST THAT BUSINESS IS GOOD THEN?
YOU ASK ME
THE OLD TOWN NEEDED A RIGHT GOOD SHAKING TO LOOSE THE COBWEBS AND EXCITE THINGS A BIT
AND THEN DAT BAD FELLA LIGHTBOURNE HOLLERED LIKE DIS ALLA WAY DOWN!
AAAAAA!
FAWUNKA

HOW *LONG* DOES ARCHARD EXPECT US TO AWAIT HIM?
AND WITH THIS PITIFUL SITTING ROOM A CACOPHONY OF CARPENTRY!
WOULD A SPOT OF TEA CALM YOUR NERVES LIKE *ALWAYS*, ALDERMAN JONES?
A COZY COUPLE *THEY* MAKE eh, JUDGE SMYTHEE?
TELL THAT TO *MRS. JONES*, OLD CHAP

AND *YOU*, PERCY? TOP OFF YOUR CUP?
YOU *KNOW* THIS WOMAN PERCY?
AN *ACQUAINTANCE*, MOTHER
WOULD YOU STILL BE WANTING TO *ACQUAINT* AT HALF PAST THREE THIS THURSDAY?

GOOD CITIZENS I AM VERY SORRY TO INFORM YOU THAT MISTER ARCHARD HAS BEEN CALLED AWAY ON URGENT MATTERS
HE REGRETS ANY *INCONVENIENCE* TO YOU
HE'S LEFT THE BUILDING?!

THE NERVE OF HIM!
WELL THAT'S THAT, I SUPPOSE
WAIT! IF WE HURRY THERE MIGHT BE TIME TO CATCH HIS CARRIAGE BEFORE IT DEPARTS!

EMMA, THIS JAUNT IS MERELY AN *INSPECTION* OF THE PENBERTHY EXCAVATIONS
WE'RE NOT EMBARKING ON *SAFARI*
MY ATTIRE IS MORE SERVICEABLE THAN THAT NEW *CANE*
AN EAGLE'S HEAD? HOW POSITIVELY OSTENTATIOUS!

UNFORTUNATELY I FEEL RATHER *UNCLAD* WITHOUT IT
WITH LIGHTBOURNE IN POSSESSION OF THE OTHER THIS *OSTENTATIOUS* WALKING STICK WILL HAVE TO SUFFICE
sniff
I SEE THAT *YOU'VE* OVER PACKED AS USUAL
WHATEVER DO YOU MEAN?

IS IT ONLY *ME*, LAD OR DOES HER VALISE GROW LARGER WITH EVERY TRIP?
AN *HEAVIER* TOO BOSS!

MERELY SOME *ESSENTIALS*, SIMON
SURVIVAL GEAR
TEMS ONE CAN'T DO WITHOUT

ONE CAN DO WITHOUT SUCH *EXERTION* EACH TIME WE TRAVEL
YOU'RE IN CHARGE ONCE AGAIN LAD
MIND THE RESIDENCE AND STAY OUT OF TROUBLE
AND WATCH OUT FOR THOSE *MONKEYS!*

CAN'T *EVER* TRUST DEM MONKEYS
YOU THERE! BOY!

WE'RE TOO LATE SMYTHEE
WHERE IS ARCHARD OFF TO?
FIVE PENCE AN I'LL TELL YA

THAT'S EXTORTION!
WE'RE GETTING IT FROM ALL SIDES NOW!
I'VE A MIND TO TAKE YOU OVER MY KNEE

AND SPANK SOME *MANNERS* INTO YOU RAGAMUFFIN
SMYTHEE PERHAPS YOU
I WON'T PAY ONE CENT!
NOPE
DA PRICE IS *FIVE*

WHO'S GOT A PENNY?
I NEVER CARRY ANY CURRENCY SMALLER THAN A TEN POUND NOTE

WELL BOY YOU'VE GOT YOUR MONEY
WHERE CAN WE FIND ARCHARD?
GOIN ON A BALLOONIE RIDE HE IS

THE AIRFIELD?

WE'RE NOT TRAVELING BY SHIP?

AIRSHIP, EMMA

GIVEN THE FATES OF MOST VESSELS VISITING THE PENBERTHY STEAMER I THOUGHT IT BEST THAT WE OPT FOR A LESS *PRECARIOUS* MODE OF TRANSPORTATION

AND YOU BELIEVE THAT THE ZINBANNU ARCHIPELAGO WILL PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF MIRANDA'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE WRECKINGS AT BALEEN?

I BELIEVE THAT PENBERTHY'S DIGS HAVE UNCOVERED SOMETHING BARONESS CROSS IS DETERMINED TO CONCEAL IF NOT DESTROY OUTRIGHT

AS SUCH IT MAY BE SOMETHING *MORE VALUABLE* THAN THE RICHES THE LATE ARCHAEOLOGIST REVEALED HIDDEN AMONG THOSE BALMY ISLANDS

WHERE DID YOU FIND THIS CLIPPING?

YOUR LIBRARY WAS PRACTICALLY *GUTTED* THE ARCHIVES SWEPT AWAY WITH THE SMELLY SEWER LEAVINGS RUNNING BENEATH THE RESIDENCE

OF COURSE...

DRIVER! STOP THE CAB!

WHOA MARGOLD!

SO, YER A READIN' MAN AFTER ALL GUV?

ONLY IF I CAN CONTINUE TO SUPPRESS MY OLFACTORY SENSE

BEG PARDON?

ALL OF THEM. HOW MUCH?

GOT MORE, STINKIN *WORSE* THAN THESE N

JUST HELP ME LOAD THEM INTO MY CAB

TAKE YOUR SWEET TIME, DETECTIVE

THE CONSORTIUM IS NOTHING IF NOT *PATIENT*

ARE YOU C-C-CERTAIN THERE'S NO R-R-ROOM INSIDE?

KLIP-KLOP KLIP-KLOP KLIP-KLOP KLIP-KLOP KLIP-KLOP

JUST HOLD *TIGHTLY*, PERCY

AND MIND THE DEBRIS

M-M-MIND *WHAT* D-D-DEBRIS?!

BRUNK

YEEP!

PERCY!

YOU HAVE *NO* IDEA, SIR

ARE YOU QUITE *SATISFIED?*
MY DRESS IS LIKELY RUINED FROM THE FETOR OF YOUR *PRECIOUS* BOOKS
I MERELY RECLAIMED WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY *MINE.*
OUR DRIVER WILL DELIVER THEM TO THE RESIDENCE.
OPHELIA CAN WORRY OVER HOW BEST TO AIR THEM OUT

SMALL CONSOLATION
HEH
OH MY!

DIDN'T EXPECT IT TO BE SO *BIG*
THE *GOSSAMER* IS NEW
SHE'S THE VERY LATEST IN LIGHTER THAN AIR VESSELS
UTTERLY *SAFE* IF YOU'RE WORRIED

I *WASN'T,* BUT
ARCHARD!

WILL YOU *PLEASE* PAUSE?
HOLD UP NOW, YA FLEA-BITTEN MARES!

ALDERMAN *JONES,* IS IT?
AS MISS PRESSMONK EXPLAINED, WHATEVER BUSINESS YOU HAVE WITH ME MUST WAIT UNTIL MY *RETURN*
YOU'LL EXCUSE ME

--THE AIRSHIP IS COMMENCING ITS BOARDING
HOW *DARE* YOU IGNORE US?
DON'T YOU REALIZE *WHO* WE ARE?

I REALIZE THAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY IMPEDING MY DEPARTURE
ARCHARD, *PLEASE.* LET'S CUT TO THE CHASE
ALL OF US HAVE FALLEN VICTIM TO A BLACKMAILER AND WE'VE COME TO ENLIST YOUR INESTIMABLE PROWESS IN FERRETING OUT THE *DESPICABLE* CULPRIT
A *REGRETTABLE* POSITION, JUDGE SMYTHEE BUT ONE THAT CAN LIKELY WAIT UNTIL MY RETURN

SIMON DEAR, *SURELY* YOU WOULDN'T LEAVE US TO THE MERCY OF A CUNNING CRIMINAL?
"NO," MISS KIPPER
THERE'S A FINE UNABRIDGED THESAURUS IN MY CAB WITH A COMPLETE LISTING OF OTHER SUITABLE *SYNONYMS* IN VARIOUS LANGUAGES
YOU'RE WELCOME TO *BORROW* IT IF YOU PROMISE TO RETURN THE VOLUME WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED

DON'T TAKE IT *PERSONALLY,* MISS KIPPER
HE'S IN A *BRUNETTE* FRAME OF MIND AT PRESENT

YOU COULD HAVE BEEN MORE *SYMPATHETIC* TO THEIR DILEMMA SIMON
POOR MISS KIPPER'S JAW WAS LEFT *AGAPE* AT YOUR SARDONIC RETORT
IT'S NOT THE *FIRST* TIME I'VE RENDERED TRISTIAN *MUTE*
WE'RE *RUINED*

PERHAPS YOU COULD RENDER SOME *HELP* WITH MY COSMETICS CASE?
ONE SIDE
WHULP!

CAREFUL, OLD CHAP
THIS IS THE *EMBARKING* QUEUE
NEARLY BROKE MY NECK WITH THAT CASE!

FORGET SIMON ARCHARD, STRANG
WE'LL SORT THIS OUT *OURSELVES*
WASN'T HE...?
PARDON, MISS
HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS, SIMON?

ONLY THAT YOUR ADDITIONAL *BALLAST* MAY LIKELY SINK THIS AIRSHIP BEFORE WE'VE EVEN BEGUN

YEOMAN, HAVE YOU LOGGED THE GAUGES SINCE TAKING FLIGHT?

IT'S QUITE *STIFLING* IN HERE

I WAS JUST ABOUT TO TAKE THE READINGS, SIR

DON'T BOTHER

I'LL HAVE A LOOK FOR MYSELF

SPIRITS

SOMEONE'S JAMMED THE VALVES

DEATH BECOMES YOU DETECTIVE

JUST A FEW DROPS TO FLAVOR YOUR TEA WITH A *FINAL* THOUGHT

AS A FELLOW MANSERVANT I'LL TRUST *YOU* TO REMAIN *DISCREET* UNTIL I'VE FINISHED SERVING YOUR TABLES

THOUGH I SHOULD ADMIT THAT YOU'LL LIKELY GET NO *GRATUITIES* TODAY, CHUM

YOU NEEDN'T HAVE TREATED THEM SO *SHABBILY*

I MAKE NO APOLOGIES

I AM NOT AT THE BECK AND CALL OF PARTINGTON'S ELITE SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY POSSESS SWOLLEN PURSES AND CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL PULL

YOU HAVE SUCH *DISDAIN* FOR THE RICH

I SERVE *PARTINGTON*

NOT JUST ITS FORTUNATE SONS AND DAUGHTERS

HE'S CERTAINLY IN A RUSH

DID YOU TAKE NOTE OF THE ENGINEER *PERSPIRING* SO?

MORE TEA?

A NICE *SPICY* BLEND, PERHAPS?

DO YOU THINK THERE'S *TROUBLE*, SIMON?

THE ENGINE ROOM OF A ZEPPELIN IS KNOWN TO BE SWELTRY

BUT STILL

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I REGRET THIS INTERRUPT ON OF YOUR AFTERNOON REFRESHMENTS

--BUT WE *MUST* EVACUATE THE AIRSHIP AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE

"*LITTERLY SAFE*," SIMON?

STATISTICALLY, WE'RE MORE LIKELY TO BE RUN OVER BY A HORSEDRAWN CARRIAGE

THE GASWORKS MUST BE FOULED

WE DON'T SEEM TO BE *LEAKING*

IN POINT OF FACT OUR AIRSHIP APPEARS TO BE INFLATING PAST THE LIMITS OF ITS SEAMS

IF MAN WERE MEANT TO FLY, HE WOULD HAVE WINGS NOT AN OVERSTUFFED BALLOON THREATENING TO POP

SO MUCH FOR OUR TEA

PERHAPS WE SHOULD LINGER AND ENJOY A *TASTE*

WE'VE ONLY YET ANOTHER *QUEUE* TO ENDURE FOR THIS PREMATURE DISEMBARKING

THAT'S THE ESCAPE ROUTE?

A REINFORCED STEEL TUBE PENETRATES THE GASEOUS INTERIOR OF THE GOSSAMER'S SKELETAL FRAME

BUT IF WE ARE ABANDONING THIS SOON TO SINKING AIRSHIP, WHY DO WE CLIMB UP?

YOU *CAN'T* BE SERIOUS

HOW *ELSE* DO YOU EXPECT US TO DECAMP, EMMA?

GRAB HOLD OF THE LINE AND MIND YOUR FOOTING THE HIGH-CHAIRS WILL CARRY US TO SAFETY!

I THINK THAT I PREFER THE *BIG* BALLOON, SIMON!

MR KENTON! MR McELROY!

STRAP YOURSELVES IN A CHAIR AND MAKE OFF!

I'LL SEE TO THIS HANDSOME COUPLE!

CAPTAIN WHAT HAS *HAPPENED?*

WHY ARE WE FLEEING?

THE CENTRAL INFLATION VALVE LASS SOMEONE'S SNAPPED IT OFF!

WE'VE NO CONTROL OVER THE UNSTABLE GASSES FILLING THE GOSSAMER!

GOOD FORTUNE THAT THERE ARE JUST *ENOUGH* HIGH-CHAIRS

AND WE'RE OVERBOOKED

THERE'S ONLY AN ALLOTMENT FOR THE *PRESENT* MANIFEST

ONE *MORE* PASSENGER AND WE'D TRULY BE IN A PITIFUL STATE

PITY FOR *YOU*

SHALL WE DRAW LOTS TO SEE WHO WILL GO DOWN WITH THE SHIP?

KLUD

OOF!

GET THE CAPTAIN INTO A CHAIR, EMMA!

I'LL FEND OFF THIS TREACHEROUS LOUT!

CAPTAIN, ARE YOU *CONSCIOUS?*

IS THIS THE WAY?

JUST STRAP YOU IN TIGHTLY AND LOOSEN THE TETHER?

EHNNN

KLANG

THE CONSORTIUM OF AGGRIEVED MANSERVANTS HAS *LONG* AWAITED THIS MOMENT ARCHARD!

YOU SABOTAGED THE AIRSHIP?

UH *YES*

HMMM

I'D EXPECT *POISON* OR SOMETHING AS COWARDLY FROM A DISGRUNTLED *BUTLER*

I AM A *VALET!*

SYNONYMOUS IN *MY* LEXICON MANSERVANT

YOU'RE WELCOME TO BORROW IT IF YOU PROMISE ITS SPEEDY RETURN

AAAH!

SIMON WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE!*

TRUST ME, *EMMA*

POOM POOM POOM POOM

I TRUST YOU? IN RECENT DAYS MY FAITH IN YOUR ABILITIES HAS RESULTED IN MY NEAR DROWNING AND PREMATURE BURIAL

PLEASE UNDERSTAND IF BURSTING THIS FRAGILE BUBBLE GIVES RISE TO CERTAIN DOUBTS OVER YOUR BEST INTENTIONS

UNTIE THE CHAIRS EMMA!

FORGIVE MY EARLIER QUIP, SIMON

THAT GAUDY EAGLE'S HEAD CERTAINLY SAVED YOU FROM SOARING UNAIDED FROM THIS DOOMED DIRIGIBLE

BUT WE ONLY HAVE TWO BALLOON CHAIRS FOR THREE DESPERATE LIVES

MINE!

ONE OF THEM IS MINE!

WAIT UNF!..

THE TETHERS!

COME BACK! COME BACK COME B--

--AGGHH!

SIMON, GRAB HOLD OF MY HAND!

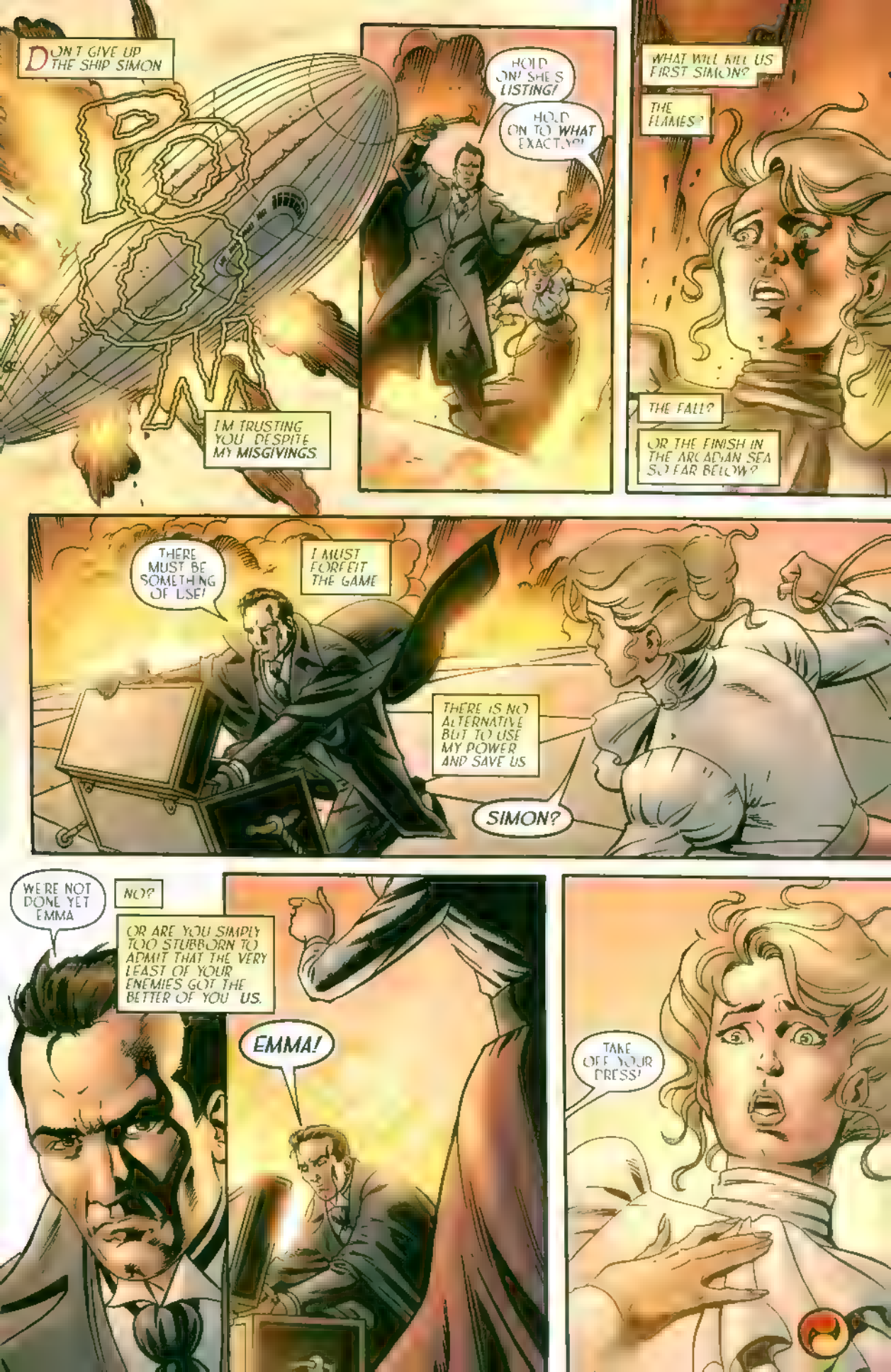
THE MANSERVANT?

FLYING SOLO

HOW IRONIC

SUICIDE USUALLY FOLLOWS MURDER

AAARR!


DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP SIMON
I'M TRUSTING YOU DESPITE MY MISGIVINGS.
HOLD ON! SHE'S LISTING!
HOLD ON TO WHAT EXACTLY!
WHAT WILL KILL US FIRST SIMON?
THE FLAMES?
THE FALL?
OR THE FINISH IN THE ARCADIAN SEA SO FAR BELOW?
THERE MUST BE SOMETHING ELSE!
I MUST FORFEIT THE GAME
THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO USE MY POWER AND SAVE US
SIMON?
WE'RE NOT DONE YET EMMA
NO?
OR ARE YOU SIMPLY TOO STUBBORN TO ADMIT THAT THE VERY LEAST OF YOUR ENEMIES GOT THE BETTER OF YOU US.
EMMA!
TAKE OFF YOUR DRESS!

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AIRSHIP 'GOSSAMER' LOST!

OUR PLAYERS

CECIL BONIFACE
SON OF THE CITY'S STREETS
SCOFFS AT SIMIANS

ADELINE DEWINTER
MARVELOUS MEDIUM
SPIRITS SPEAK THROUGH HER

NEVILLE STRANG
BIG GAME HUNTER
STALKS THE SMALLEST PREY

THE GOSSAMER PHOTOGRAPHED JUST PRIOR TO HER DEPARTURE FROM FINNEGAN

Simon Archard Among Missing

Eyewitness accounts courtesy of shaken passengers confirm that the dirigible *Gossamer*, lately bound for ports of call in the Southern Arcadian Seas, has apparently exploded and plummeted into the briny depths. Authorities fear — but have not overruled *sabotage* as cause of the *Gossamer's* untimely demise.

All aboard save for three unaccounted billets were lifted to safety via the airship's complement of "high-chair" personal inflation contraptions, the occupants of which continue to arrive hourly on prevailing breezes. Others blown northward have secured alternative means of passage in their return to Partington.

Tragically, those likely lost at sea as the *Gossamer* was consumed in a fireball of its own volatile gasses were Partington's master sleuth Simon Archard, his able assistant Miss Emma Bishop, and a bursar, one Rupert Dunmore. Confounding this toll of the missing is an uncorroborated report submitted by Dunmore's own kin that their relation suffered injuries to his head prior to the emergency disembarking and was secured into a high-chair by helpful passengers. Dunmore has yet to be interviewed by investigators.

The *Gossamer's* captain, J. Tiberius Shatsworth of Slattery, himself believes the theory proffered of criminal chicanery downing the airship. Shatsworth claims that an unknown crew member, perhaps the *very* saboteur, attacked him as the captain attempted to cast Mister Archard, Miss Bishop, and himself — last, of course — afloat in the few remaining

•••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

FUNERARY NOTICE

CARSTAIRS A. RAFFERTY Mister Carstairs Albert Rafferty, Senior Valet in the employ of his honor, the venerable Judge Earnest Smythee, died suddenly while attending the Judge's estate home Monday last. A closed casket ceremony will commence one day hence at the Eternal Slumber Mausoleum. Judge Smythee encourages any parties with serious interest in the late Mister Rafferty's position to inquire following a suitable period of bereavement. Under-Butlers need not apply.

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

CGE

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A THCONE?
A SCONE
THAT TH THE THILLIETHT THING I'VE EVER HEARD
BUT TRUE JUST THE SAME
WHY WOULD DADDY THUFFER OVER A LOTHT THCONE?

THE SCONE IS THE BEGINNING

THO FOR WANT OF A THCONE, THOMETHING *ELTHE* WATH LOTHT

THOMETHING *VERY* IMPORTANT TO DADDY

PRECISELY

AND IT ALL STARTED WITH A SIMPLE SCONE

THEN, IF THERE ARE NOT *OTHER* ADDENDUMS TO THE APOCRYPHA, I HEREBY *ADJOURN* THIS GATHERING OF THE CONSORTIUM

T.C.O.A.M. Assembly in Progress

EAT UP BEFORE YOU *DEPART*, MEN

WITH THE MASTER AWAY, WE SHAN'T LET SUCH A *REPAST* GO TO LARDER MICE, WOT?

I WOULD ENCOURAGE US TO LAY SIEGE TO THE JUDGE'S WINE CELLAR IF HE DIDN'T TAKE PERSONAL STOCK OF EVERY LAST CARAFE AND CRUET BEFORE LIGHTING OUT ON HOLIDAY!

HAHAHAHA HAHAHAHA HAHA!

ANOTHER *PRODUCTIVE* RALLY, WOU DN'T YOU SAY MISTER RAFFERTY?

INDEED, GENTS

I DO SO ENJOY THESE CONCLAVES TO CHRONICLE OUR *VERY IMPORTANT* LIST

LADY KIPPERS AMOROUS ACROBATICS ALONE WILL STIR MY *DREAMS* TONIGHT

MISTER BEAGLE? MISTER JEEVES?

CAN I NOT ENTREAT EITHER OF YOU TO FINISH THIS FINAL SCONE?

A BEDTIME SNACK TO WARM YOUR BELLY BEFORE THOUGHTS OF TRISTIAN KIPPER SULLY YOUR *CHASTE* MIND, MISTER RAFFERTY

NEXT MEETING I'LL ADD HER PECULIAR PREFERENCE FOR WARMED MARMALADE!

HAHA HAHA HAHAHA

MARMALADE, eh?

SAUCY LASS

I SUPPOSE ONE MORE SCONE WOULDN'T TIP THE SCALE TOO FAR TO *EXCESS*, FAT MISTER RAFFERTY

EVEN *WITHOUT* WARMED MARMALADE

QUITE *MUNCH-GOOD*, ACTUALLY

YUMMY, REALLY

AS SOON AS I SQUIRREL AWAY OUR *VERY IMPORTANT LIST*, I MUST GIVE KUDOS TO THE COO--

KKKKKKK

--OOK

BUT FOR THE *TRIFLE* OF A SCONE, POOR MISTER RAFFERTY'S WEIGHT EXCEEDED THE CAPACITY OF TIMBERS WEAKENED IN THE UPHEAVAL OF PARTINGTON THOSE MANY WEEKS AGO

THIS MOST FASTIDIOUS MANSERVANT LEFT THE WAKING WORLD WITH A MESS FOR SOMEONE *ELSE* TO TIDY AFTER

THAT TH QUITE A *THTORY*, THAMANTHA BUT HOW DOETH IT CONTHERN *DADDY*?

I DIDN'T THUMMON YOU TO THPIN *RIDDLETH*

NO, LASS

"BUT YOU DID SUMMON ME FROM THE CHARNEL HOUSE..

MY FINAL RESTING PLACE, BENEATH A TANGLE OF THOSE WHO WOULD NOT ANSWER YOUR CALL

ARE YOU ERE SOMEWHERE'S, GEORGE?

THAT'S IT LAD! SWING AND A HEAVE!

HAVE YOU NO SHAME, MAN?

SEVEN WEEKS GONE SINCE HOLEY THURSDAY AND THE DEAD ARE STILL STACKED LIKE CORDWOOD.

CAN'T THIS CREMATORIUM DO MORE THAN CAST A PALL OF ASH OVER PARTINGTON?

UNDOUBTEDLY, THIS POSES SOME SMALL HAZARD TO THE PUBLIC'S HEALTH?

THESE ARE THE UNFORTUNATES NO ONE SEEMS TO HAVE MISSED, MR. DeWINTER

BETTER THEY MOULDER IN UNTIDY BUNDLES THAN BE PICKED AT BY THE GARGOYLES.

THE ONE WEARING THAT CHANDELIER AS A HAT IS FRESH, THOUGH... JUST LAST NIGHT AND A LONG TIME AFTER THE FINAL TEMBLOR

THE CONSTABULARY SEEM LESS INCLINED TO BELIEVE FOUL PLAY IN THE DISPATCH OF THIS MANSERVANT JUDGE SMYTHE'S, I BELIEVE

PERHAPS THE PENNY ARCADIAN MIGHT

MURDER IS THE EXPERTISE OF THE ESTEEMED SIMON ARCHARD, MY GOOD MAN

AND IT'S BEEN FAR TOO LONG SINCE I'VE HAD TO TOIL AWAY AT THE OBITUARIES.

EVEN SO

SURELY THERE'S SOMETHING NEWSWORTHY IN SUCH AN IGNOMINIOUS END

IF NOT, THEN YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...

I'VE GOT A FIRE TO STOKE

THE ONLY THING FIT TO PRINT WOULD BE THE UTTER HORROR OF THIS ABATTOIR

ALTHOUGH WE COULD CALL ON OUR READERSHIP TO AID YOUR IDENTIFICATION BY PASTING IN FUNERARY PHOTOGRAPHS OR ARTIST'S RENDERINGS OF THESE POOR SOULS

CUT DOWN IN THEIR PRIME AS THEY CLUTCHED THEIR LAST WILL AND TESTAMENTS

[illegible]

GOOD GRAVY!

WILL I BE QUOTED IN THE MORNING OR AFTERNOON EDITION?

CONSIDER YOURSELF OFF THE RECORD AND OFF THE HOOK, CORONER

I'M CONSIDERING A DIFFERENT SORT OF EXPOSE

DeWINTER, OLD BOY?

NO REST FOR THE FOURTH ESTATE, eh?

I'VE NO TIME FOR IDLE CHIT-CHAT, FELLOW

..PERHAPS YOU CAN PRATTLE ON ABOUT YOUR WILD BEASTIES ANOTHER TIME?

MONSIEUR BUFFOON

DADDY'TH JUTHT THTOUT.

IT'TH A GLANDULAR CONDITION

"WHAT DID YOU THAY THAT MAN'TH NAME WATH AGAIN?

"I DIDN'T

"SOUND TRAVELS ODDLY AND UNRELIABLY WHEN YOU'RE BURIED UNDER A MOUND OF DISSOLVING FLESH

WHERE IS IT?!

BUT I SAW HIS SURPRISE CLEAR AS DAY

EVEN WITH A HEAP OF DEAD PRESSING DOWN UPON ME

"BUT WHERE WATH DADDY?"

WHERE ELSE?"

LOOKS TO BE A SLOW NEWS DAY, MR DeWINTER

NOT ANYMORE, GEOFFREY

NOT E'EN SCANDALS DOCUMENTED IN THIS DEED RISE ABOVE SLANDER FROM THE DEAD HELP

BUT THEN THIS VERY VILIFYING LIST WILL REMAIN SAFE FROM PRYING EYES

SAFE heh GOOD ONE, TIMMY

TIK-TIK-TIK-TIK-TIK

I SPIED THE COMBINATION CLEAR AS DAY, TOO

SHALL I RECOUNT IT FOR YOU, ADELINE?

DON'T BOTHER

IT'TH THIMPLY THE DATE OF MUMMY AND DADDY'TH ANNIVERTHARY

TELL ME ABOUT THAT OTHER MAN, THAMANTHA

I'VE NO NAME TO GIVE YOU, ADELINE

WATH HE THE THIEF?

NO

THE THIEF WASN'T A MAN AT ALL

BLIP BLIP

TIK-TIK-T-TIK KLIK KLEK

OO?

AH!

ERRHN... ERRHN!

HA-HEH!

DADDY YOU *MUTHT* THEN TO ME!

THAMANTHA THAYTH YOURE GOING TO SOOTHE THOMETHING *VERY IMPORTANT*

A *LITHT*

ADELINE DEAR I MUST INSIST YOU SPEND MORE TIME PRACTICING YOUR *SIBILANTS*

THERE ARE TIMES WHEN YOU REALLY ARE QUITE *INSCRUTABLE*

AND I THOUGHT YOUR NEW DOLLY'S NAME WAS [illegible] *GOOD GRAVY*

DADDY YOU KNOW THE NAMES ARE ALWAYTH *CHANGING--*

--OH

I TH[illegible] THAMANTHA *THAID*

ENOUGH OF THIS *NONSENSE*, ADELINE

YOU MUST RUN ALONG AND PLAY *ELSEWHERE* NOW

DADDY'S HAD A BIT OF *TROUBLE*

MISTER DEWINTER

NOT *NOW*, BIDDLE

MY PRIVATE OFFICE HAS BEEN *PILFERED* AND I'VE GOT TO CALL UPON SIMON ARCHARD!

BUT, SIR, *THAT'S* JUST IT

THE AIRSHIP *GOSSAMER* HAS BEEN LOST AT SEA WITH ARCHARD AND HIS PRETTY ASS STANT STILL ABOARD!

AR[illegible] *GONE?!*

POOR POOR [illegible] SIMON

T[illegible] WITH YOU NOW THAMANTHA?

ARE YOU *QUITE* FINISHED WITH YOUR RESPITE MISTER LEPTON?

YOUR *FOURTH* THIS MORNING I MIGHT ADD

OR SHALL I LAY IN THIS SECRET PASSAGE ALL BY *MYSELF?*

APOLOGIES, MISTER GRILLEN STILL A BIT *UNSETTLED* BEING SO CLOSE TO ARCHARD IN HIS VERY RESIDENCE

NOT UNLIKE TARRYING IN THE *LION'S DEN,* WOULDN'T YOU SAY?

ARCHARD LEFT PARTINGTON BY DIRIGIBLE DAYS AGO

BY THE TIME HE RETURNS, THE CONSORTIUM WILL HAVE *UNFETTERED* ACCESS TO SLIP INTO TH S GREAT FORTRESS AND SLIT THE BLIGHTER'S THROAT AS HE *SLEEPS.*

I'D LIKE TO DO IT *MYSELF*

WITH RAFFERTY GONE, SOMEONE MUST RISE TO THE OCCASION AND LEAD OUR MERRY BAND OF *AGGRIEVED MANSERVANTS.*

POOR POOR M STER RAFFERTY

IT SEEMS LIKE ONLY DAYS SINCE WE SUPPED AND TALKED GAILY OF RIDDING OURSELVES OF ARCHARD ONCE AND FOR ALL

IT *WAS* JUST DAYS AGO, MISTER LEPTON

AND YOU NEEDN'T SHED A TEAR FOR *RAFFERTY*

THE DAFT BLOKE LOST OUR *VERY IMPORTANT LIST*

BUT THEN *WHO* CONTINUES TO BLACKMAIL OUR EMPLOYERS?

MASTER PERCY AND HIS SHREW OF A MOTHER STILL RECEIVE EXTORT NG M SSIVES--

EXCUTHE ME!

BUT I ONLY JUTHT HEARD THAT THIMON ITH MITHING AND I'VE COME ALL THITH WAY TO THEE FOR MYTHELF!

DAT S SOME *TONGUE* YA GOT THERE, MISSY

I BET A *HALF* OF WHUT YOU SAID AIN T EVEN PROPER WORDS

I THAID THIMON ITH *MITHING.*

DA BOSS GOES MISSIN A LOT

BUT HE USUALLY *FINDS* HISSELF

HE'S A *DETECTOR,* Y KNOW

YOUSE CAN SIT AND WAIT FOR 'IM IF YOU FANCY

JUST NOT SO *CLOSE* AN ALL

STOOP S NOT THAT *BIG*

I NEED THIMON TO HELP MY DA

--MY *FATHER*

HE'TH LOTHT A *VERY IMPORTANT LITHT.*

YER NOT BORN TO PARTINGTON, IS YA?

SPEAKIN' MOSTLY *FOREIGN* AN ALL

I THPEAK JUTHT *FINE,* THANK YOU

RIGHTY

DID THIMON THAY WHEN HE WOULD RETURN?

DA--*FATHER* DETHPERATELY NEEDTH HITH HELP

NAH IF YER ASKIN WHUT I *THINK* YER SAYIN

HE ONLY SAID, "*LAD, YOU'RE IN CHARGE ONCE AGAIN*"

AN HERE I SITS, THE *LAD* THAT IS IN CHARGE ONCE AGAIN

BUT IF DA BOSS MADE *ME* DA BOSS THEN I RECKON DAT MAKES ME A *DETECTOR* THEN, TOO.

I COULD HELP YOU FIND DAT LIST!

IT TH *VERY IMPORTANT*

WHATEVER YOU *THINK* YER SAYIN, MISSY

MY NAMETH *ADELINE*

RIGHT *ADDY*

ARCHARD MISSING

WHAT A STROKE OF *LUCK!*

QUITE SO MISTER LEPTON BUT HOLD YOUR ELATION IN CHECK

WE SHOULD LIKELY *FOLLOW* THESE RAGAMUFFINS

PERHAPS THEY JUST MIGHT *LEAD* US TO THE TALLY SHEET RAFFERTY LET LOOSE FROM HIS COLD DEAD GRASP

DIS *AIN'T* NO WAY TO BE DETECTOR N

PLAYIN DOLLIES AND DRESS-UP *AS IF!*

BE PATHIENT

CONTHULTING THE THPIRITH ITH A *LEGITIMATE* MODE OF NVETHTIGATHION

I *AM* ONE OF ARCHARDTH AGENTH, YOU KNOW

JUTHT DON'T TELL MY *PARENTH*

NOW, MITHTER GILTHY HATH THOMETHING TO INFORM UTH

HE TH

DA BOSS'D BE LOOKIN' FOR DEM *CLUE* THINGS

HE TH

AN MISS BISHOP WOU'D BE SMI'N SWEET AS A

--GUPPY?

ALL THIS TIME WE WUZ TALKIN TO A FISH?

HE TH HUNGRY

MISS *ADELINE BETHESMA DeWINTER,* HAVEN'T I WARNED YOU THAT YOUR MOTHER'S SILKEN SCARVES *AREN'T* FOR THIS SORT OF PLAY?

YOU'LL SOIL THEM AND *I'LL* BE THE ONE BLAMED

THORRY WILLA

AND STOP FEEDING MISTER GILSY SO MUCH.

HE'LL PUFF UP AND EXPIRE FOR *CERTAIN*

I'VE BROUGHT MILK AND CAKES FOR YOU AND YOUR uh *GENTLEMAN FRIEND*

YETH, YETH THANK YOU, WILLA.

NOW PLEATHE LEAVE UTH.

WE'VE GOT IMPORTANT *BUTHINETH* TO ATTEND TO

JUST SEE THAT YOUR MOTHER DOESN'T SPY YOU SPEAKING TO YOUR *SPIRITS*

SHE'LL HAVE CONNIPTIONS *HERSELF*

NOW, *WHERE* WERE WE?

HAVE YOU ANY *INTHIGHT* TO OFFER UTH, MITHTER GILTHY?

BLOOP

IF I CAN'T UNNERSTANDS YA, I DOUBT THAT FISHIE OR ANYBODY ELSE WILL

HAPPY DAYS JENNIFER DO YOU HEAR?

CLOSED

RAFFERTY MAY BE ON THE SLAB, BUT OUR PLOT PROCEEDS UNINTERRUPTED.

RON C.

HIS *CONSORTIUM* IS LOATH TO INVOLVE OUTSIDERS IN THEIR CRIMINALITY, BUT WHAT AM I IF NOT A *MANSERVANT* CATERING TO MANY TINY MASTERS?

OUR DEBTORS SHALL BE PAID WITH CHARITY FROM *DEEPER* POCKETS.

HA-HEH!

ORABLE JUDGE SMYTHEE

INDEED.

THE *ANIMAL FAIRE* WILL OPEN COME SPRING WITH A FRESH COAT OF PAINT AND A FEW MORE *EXOTIC* ATTRACTIONS TO FILL THOSE EMPTY PADDOCKS

AND I WILL REGAIN MY *RIGHTFUL* PLACE AMONG PARTINGTON'S ELITE

OOO.

WE'LL FIND US *BOTH* IN THE SOCIETY PAGES, JENNY

WE MUTHT BE EXTHTREMELY *QUIET*

WHUT?

JUTHT TIPTOE, IF YOU PLEATHE

BEG PARDON?

PENNY ARC

THITH ITH DA--*FATHER TH* OFF THE

HE LOCKED THE LITHT IN HITH THAFE

LIST O WHUT?

SHOPPIN? THINGS WHUT YOU'VE GOTTA DO?

DOETH IT *MATTER?*

WEL, *SURELY*

DA BOSS A WAYS ASKS DEM KINDS A *QUESTIONS*

HE GETS TA THINKIN LIKE DEM ROBBERS AND THEN HE LOOKS FOR CLUES TO THEIR *WHEREBEGONES*.

BUT HOW COULD A ROBBER ENTER A LOCKED OFF THE WITHOUT BREAKING THE WINDOWTH?

WAIT! PERHAPTH IT WATH A *THPIRIT!*

A GHOTHT THIEF WHO COULD WALK THROUGH WALLTH AND REACH RIGHT INTO DADDY TH THAFE TO THTEAL THE LITHT!

THEN WHY DIN'T HE FALL THROUGH DA FLOOR?

GHOTHT CAN BE *THELECTIVELY* IMMATERIAL!

ASK ME, DAT DIRTY THIEF MUSTA FLOATED WAY UP TO DA WINDOW IN A *BALLOONIE*

LIKE THE KIND WHUT DA BOSS GOT ON

JUST *LITTLER*, MAYBE

ELLO WHAT'S *DIS?*

A HANDSIES PRINT!

DA THIEF MUSTA BEEN JUST A LITTLE FELLA, SOME KINDA

KID THIEF!

BUT THAT THTILL DOETHN'T EXTHPLAIN HOW HE GOT *INTHIDE*

I TOLD YOU *BALLOONIES*

BETCHA HE FLOATED RIGHT DOWN DA CHIMBLEY!

HAH!

A CLUE

ARCA
HOW LONG HAVE THEY BEEN IN THERE?
TOO *BLOODY* LONG FOR US TO STAND OUT IN THE COLD
WAIT, THEY'RE COMING OUT
I THINK WE SHOULD TAKE OUR CLUE TO THE *CONSTABULARY*
AND LET DEM *COPPERS* TAKE ALL DA CREDIT?
WE NEED TA MAKE A COMPOST SKETCH
A *WHAT?*
LIKE DEM WANTED POSTIES
HANG BACK, M'STER LEPTON
I'LL WAGER THESE MOPPETS ARE UP TO NO GOOD AT ALL
THERE'TH THCRAP PAPER AROUND THE BACK
THE TYPETHETTER GIVETH ME THE CATHT OFFTH
HOW DO YOU GET BY TALKIN LIKE THAT?
THEY'RE *NEWSIES!*
EVILEST OF CHILDREN!
NEVER DEPOSITING THE PAPER IN THE BOX *PROPERLY!*
AND THITH ITH THE PRINTING PRETH
JOHN THE TYPETHETTER WILL HAVE PAPER AND PENCILTH
RIGHTY
MEMBER HE'S GOT HAIR AND HE'S SMALL
AND HE'S A DIRTY NO-ACCOUNT CLIPPER
LIKE DIS BENTY BLOKE
BAD SEED, HE IS
DAT'S NOT A KID THIEF
TH'A *DEAD* KID THIEF
OH
THEN IT'S A *BALDY* KID THIEF
YOU FORGOT DA *CLUE*
LOOKS TO BE MORE *FUR* THAN HAIR, LAD AND LASSIE
ARE DU *THURE,* JOHN?
TOO COARSE TO BE ANYTHING BUT A SMIDGE FROM AN ANIMAL'S COAT, MISS ADELINE
Oh, YEAH?
WHERE WUZ *YOU* LAST NIGHT?
CAN WE *PLEATHE* GO BACK TO OUR THKETCHING?
DUNNO 'BOUT YOU JOHN
BUT I'M BETTIN' ADDY HERE WUZ BROUGHT UP BY ANIMALS HERSELF SPEAKIN LIKE *DAT*
YOU DON'T THINK THOSE SCAMPS ARE *ARCHARD'S AGENTS* DO YOU, MISTER GRILLEN?
DON'T BE *RIDICULOUS,* MISTER LEPTON
BUT I HAVE HEARD *STORIES*
YES, WE'RE ALL WELL AWARE OF THE GREAT SIMON ARCHARD'S CADRE OF CRIME STOPPING ASSISTANTS
THERE'S UP TO BE HUNDREDS OF THEM
HOW CAN YOU STAND SO TALL AND LACK A SPINE?
VERY WELL THEY'RE THE MOST EVIL CHILDREN
AND WE'RE *AGGRIEVED MANSERVANTS!*

YOU THEE, A THERPENT. A HAIRY ONE, OF COURTHE. COULD THLITHER DOWN THE CHIMNEY FLUE AND OPEN DA--
FATHER TH THAFE WITH VETHTIGIAL LIMBTH!
NAH.
DAT'S NOT HOW IT WUZ AT ALL
I'D BET MY HAT--
--DEM MONKEYS DID IT!
SAYS THE MONKEY BOY.
WHO'TH THAT?
DA BAD SEED.
'ELLO, CECIL
DAT'S MY NAME
THETHIL?
I'LL BE WANTIN ME SHOOTERS BACK
I WON DEM AGGIES FAIR AND SQUARE
I CAN'T HELP IT IF DA MONKEYS WENT AND NICKED 'EM THEN
NO MORE TALK OF FANCIFUL MONKEYS RUNNIN' OFF WITH ME MARBLES
MONKEYS DO IT ALL DA TIME
Tee hee!
GOOD ONE
THALL WE GO, THETHIL?
I THINK I KNOW WHERE WE CAN THEARCH FOR OUR THUTHPECT
YER JUST LUCKY I'VE GOT PAPERS TO HAWK.
SNICKER
ANOTHER GOOD ONE, NEWTHBOY!
THAT YOU DO, LAD
AND YOU'LL SELL PLENTY TODAY WITH A BANNER LIKE THIS.
GORBLIMEY!
THIMON
NOTHIN TO WORRY
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AIRSHIP 'GOSSAMER' LOST!
ON ARCHARD AMONG MISSING
DA BOSS CAN FIND HISSELF BETTER THAN ANYBODY.
THE ANIMAL FAIRE?
THESE ARE CUNNING CHILDREN, MISTER LEPTON
IT'TH CLOTHED.
IT OPENTH IN THE THPRING, THILLY.
CLOSED
LOCKED GATES NEVER KEPT ME OUT OF NUFFIN
YOU'VE GOT A THECRET ENTRANTHE?
SOME BODY'S GOTTA WATCH DEM MONKEYS

I WENT TO THE ANIMAL FAIRE

ONTHE BEFORE IT THUT DOWN

WHERE THOULD WE THTART?

TERRORGATIN'

DAT'S WHUT DA BOSS *WOULD* DO.

I'LL BE ALL FROWNY MEAN

AN YOU BE SWEET AS PIE

FOR WHAT PURPOTHE?

TA *CONFOUND* EM

DAT'S HOW DA BOSS PLAYS IT

HAI!

WE'LL START WITH THESE BOYOS

DAT FUZZY-EARED ONE'S DA WORST OF ALL

DAT'S RIGHT

YA KNOWS DIS DAY WOULD COME

ONE OF YA'S DID IT, SO SPEAK UP!

THITH ITHN'T GOING VERY WELL

MONKEYS IS BAD, I TELL YA

MONKEYTH THEEM TO BE RATHER *THTUPID*

DON'T LET *DAT* FOOL YA

RURRR...

MAYBE DIS *BIG* FELLA'S GOT SOMETHIN TA CONFESS

YOU YOUNG ONES WOULDN'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH *THIS* BEASTIE

BOMBAS NOT MUCH FOR *COMPANY*

ESPECIALLY ON AN EMPTY STOMACH

I'M WITHHOLDING HIS MEALS UNTIL HE BEHAVES MORE *PROPERLY*

GOT SUMTHIN TA *HIDE*, DOES HE?

THAT'S NEVILLE THTRANG, THE FAMOUTH ADVENTHURER

ONLY STRENGTH ENOUGH TO PUT YOUR ARMS UP AND USE THEM TO PICK HIS VERY LARGE TEETH AP

I THINK YOU WAYWARD CHILDREN SHOULD ACCOMPANY ME TO MY OFFICE SO WE CAN TELEPHONE YOUR PARENTS

THIS IS NO PLACE TO WANDER ALONE AT DUSK

MITHTER THTRANG, WE'RE TRYING TO THOLVE A *CRIME*

A CRIME, YOU SAY?

SOME LITTLE FUZZY BUGGER NICKED A *VERY IMPORTANT LIST*

GO ON

ADDY HERE CAN TELL YA MORE IFEN YA CAN *UNDERSTANDS* DAT FOREIGN TONGUE

THE LITHT WATH *THTOLEN* FROM MY DADDY TH OFFITHETH AT *THE PENNY ARCADIAN*

WE FOUND A CLUE, A THMIDGE OF FUR AT THE THENE OF THE CRIME

AND YOU BELIEVE YOUR *CULPRIT* IS HIDING AMONG MY ANIMAL FAIRE?

THETHIL THOUGHT IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN A *MONKEY*

A SIMIAN? LIKE MY LITTLE FRIEND HERE?

DIS ONE'S A *LADY* MONKEY

I DRAWED A *BOY* MONKEY IN MY SKETCHE

JENNIFER SEEMS TO *LIKE* YOU LAD

AAH-AAH!

SHE'S NABBIN MY CAKE!

GIVES IT BACK!

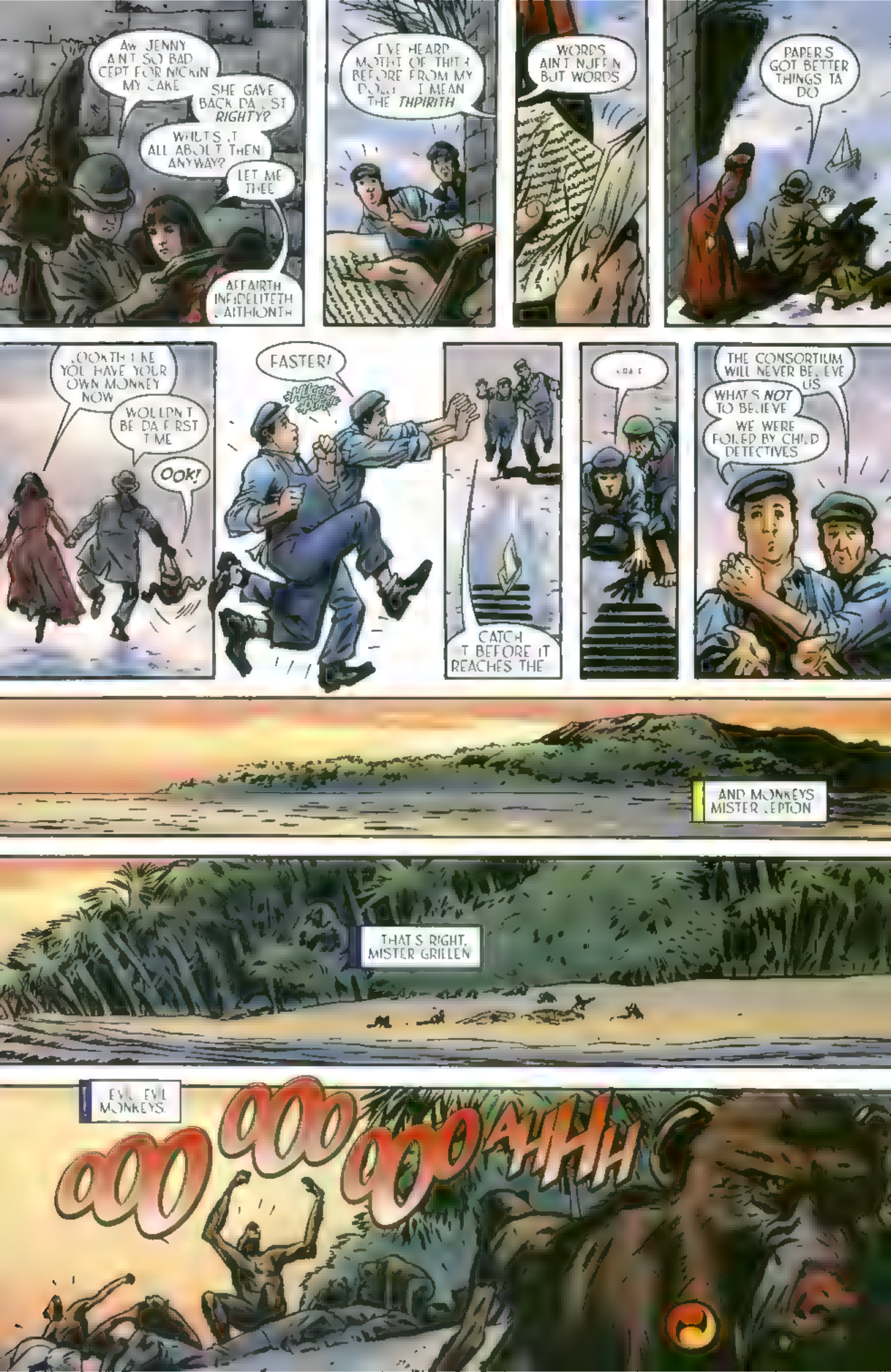
OOK!

WATCH OUT FOR THAT INKPOT, JENNIFER!

BLIP BLIP

IT WATH YOU

JENNIFER'S A VERY SMART SIMIAN, CHILDREN
TRAINED HER MYSELF
SHE'S QUITE ADEPT AT UNLOCKING THE LOCKED
I WOULD GO SO FAR TO SAY THAT JENNY HAS AN EAR FOR IT
HER TALENTS ARE HELPING ME TO RELIEVE CERTAIN FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES
OOO!
RIGHTY
A CAT BURGLAR MONKEY WHUT STEALS
RIGHTY
RUN, ADDY!
YOU'LL NOT BE RUNNING ANYWHERE WITH THAT PARCHMENT, SCAMP!
REE?
REEEK!
OUT OF MY WAY, JENNIFER!
TREACHEROUS BEAST!
COME ON ADDY!
I GOT DA LIST
WE'LL HIDE IN DA FAIRE WIT' DA ANIMALS
BUT I THIN'T THAT DANGEROUTH?
NOT HALF AS DANGEROUS AS THE BUSINESS END OF MY BLUNDERBUSS, CHILD
I HAVEN'T HUNTED IN FAR TOO LONG
WHERE THOULD WE HIDE?
LET'S SQUEEZE IN ONE OF DEM EMPTY CAGES!
NOW LET'S BE REASONAB-
BRING BACK MY BLINKIN' LIST, YOU DAMNABLE CHILDREN!
NO ONE ELSE NEED DIE OVER IT!
COME, JENNY PERHAPS YOU CAN EARN BACK MY FAVOR BY SNIFFING THEM OUT
DID YOU HEAR THAT?
WITH A CHANDELIER?
DID THEY TUCK AWAY IN ONE OF THE VACANT PADDOCKS?
THERE!
JENNY NOT THE BLUNDER BUSS!
IDIOT MONKEY!
HOW AM I TO BLAST THEM IF YOU TAKE THE BLOODY--
RURRR...
HUNGRRE
EEEEEEEE
LOSE
BUT THAT MONKEY TH THEY FOLLOWING UTH!



AW, JENNY AIN'T SO BAD CEPT FOR NICKIN' MY CAKE
SHE GAVE BACK DA ...ST RIGHTY?
WHUT'S IT ALL ABOUT THEN ANYWAY?
LET ME THEE
AFFAIRTH INFIDELITETH ...AITHIONTH
I'VE HEARD MOTHT OF THITH BEFORE FROM MY ... I MEAN THE THPIRITH
WORDS AIN'T NUFFIN BUT WORDS
PAPERS GOT BETTER THINGS TA DO
...OOKTH LIKE YOU HAVE YOUR OWN MONKEY NOW
WOULDN'T BE DA FIRST TIME
OOK!
FASTER!
CATCH IT BEFORE IT REACHES THE
THE CONSORTIUM WILL NEVER BELIEVE US
WHAT'S NOT TO BELIEVE
WE WERE FOILED BY CHILD DETECTIVES
AND MONKEYS MISTER ...EPTON
THAT'S RIGHT, MISTER GRILLEN
EVIL, EVIL MONKEYS.
OOOOOOOOOAHHH

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A FETCHING BEAUTY, HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

THEOPHILUS DARE

MAN OF ACTION SEEKS A LOST CITY'S TREASURES

THE STRANGE CASE OF NEVILLE STRANG

Upon reports of blood-curdling screams emanating from the Animal Faire, Partington constabulary discovered the grisly remains of Neville Strang, celebrated hunter of large game, Partington socialite, and proprietor of the zoological park.

Strang's mangled corpse was found within the mortar and metal paddock of "Bomba," a great simian captured by the late Strang and presented among his collection of live beasties. Apparently, the hungry gorilla dragged Strang into its enclosure and mauled his master to an undoubtedly horrifying demise when Strang presented the creature's daily feeding.

With master detective Simon Archard and his omnipresent assistant Emma Bishop believed killed in the tragic Gossamer airship disaster days ago, police solicited the aid of Iain Crombie, another sleuth-by-trade eager to provide his deductive skills in confirming this suspicion.

Crombie's elucidations, however, proved stranger still. While Strang's Animal Faire has appeared ramshackle in recent months (a situation not ameliorated by the events of Malcolm Lightbourne's "Holey Thursday" terroristic attack on Partington) the truth as revealed by Mr. Crombie points to a business on the verge of utter bankruptcy and a once-wealthy adventurer facing debtor's prison.

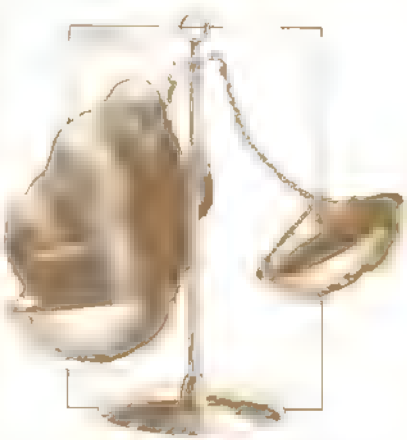
A closer inspection of the Animal Faire has shown its occupants to be ill-kept and half-starved, while evidence plumbed from Neville Strang's private offices have shown him to have concocted an elaborate scheme to extort his own affluent acquaintances in order to maintain personal solvency…**PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE**

SIMIAN SYMPATHY

As of this writing, the fate of the so-called "Bomba" remains uncertain. Meanwhile, the great simian has swiftly become an unwitting symbol for man's inhumanity to his beastly cousins.

City officials cite Bomba as a public menace, whether caged or no. These very politicos have called the simian to be put down. Several taxidermists have offered their services in stuffing and mounting the creature for public display.

Other concerned citizens, now mindful of Bomba's shameful treatment by the apparently destitute Strang, seek to garner a stay of execution for the animal, arguing that "ma nutrition, not malice, forced this monkey's paw to rise against its keeper." This same coalition is seeking



offerings of charity to spare the entire Animal Faire from receivership and refurbish the zoo, with hopes of re-opening its gates free to Partington's public…**PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE**

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

CGE

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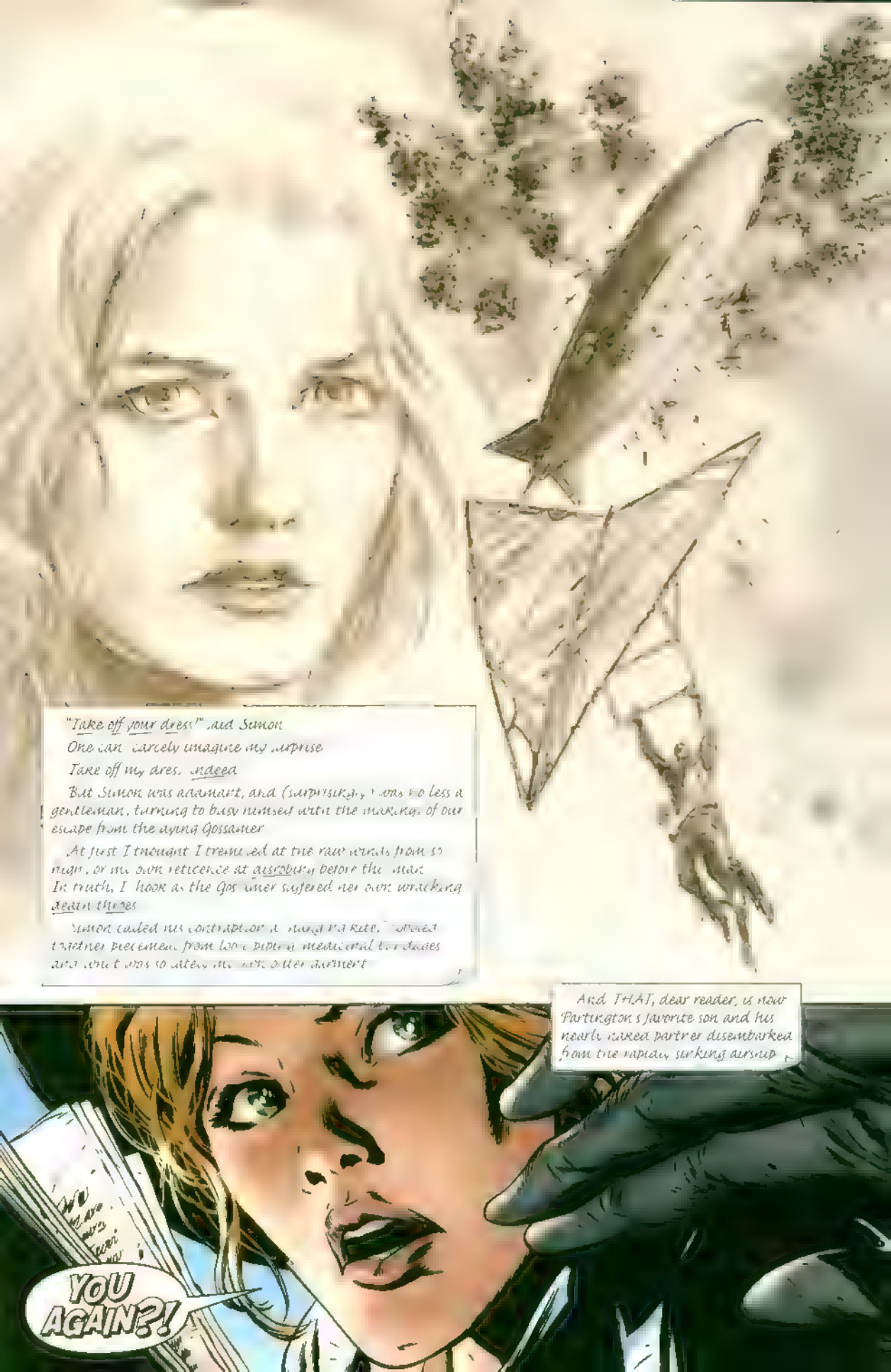


"Take off your dress!" said Simon.

One can scarcely imagine my surprise.

Take off my dress, indeed.

But Simon was adamant, and (surprisingly) was no less a gentleman, turning to busy himself with the makings of our escape from the dying Gossamer.

At first I thought I trembled at the raw winds from so high, or my own reticence at disrobing before the man. In truth, I shook as the Gossamer suffered her own wracking death throes.

Simon called his contraption a "hanging kite," cobbled together piecemeal from loose piping, medicinal bandages and what was so lately my own outer garment.

And THAT, dear reader, is how Partington's favorite son and his nearly naked partner disembarked from the rapidly sinking airship.

YOU AGAIN?!

IT IS THE TENTH DAY ON THIS LESS THAN DESERTED ATOLL

ONCE MORE THE LOCALS HAVE IGNORED MY DESIRE FOR PRIVACY

GIVE IT BACK YOU FLEA RIDDED RUFFIAN!

OOO!

OOO-HAH!

HEE-HAH!

EACH DAY THE BABBOON TROOP IS MORE EMBOLDENED

DON'T PRETEND AS IF YOU HAVEN'T HEARD ME

BUT I WILL NOT TOLERATE THE FILCHING OF MY DIARY

HAH-HOO!

FOR IT JUST MAY BE THE ONE THING KEEPING ME SANE IN THIS LAWLESS MONKEYHOUSE

NO!

NOT INTO THE JUNGLE!

I'M WARNING YOU FOR THE LAST TIME MAL

PROLONG THIS CHASE AND YOU'LL FORCE MY HAND TO VIOLENCE

I NAMED THE TROOP ON THE FOURTH DAY, MOSTLY TO STAVE OFF THE TEDIUM

MAL WAS DUBBED FIRSTLY

SHORTENED FOR MALCONTENT

OR MALEFACTOR

MALCOLM

NOW THEN, WHO WANTS A THUMPING!

HOO!

MALCOLM MAINTAINS HIS POSITION AS THE TROOP'S ALPHA THROUGH CRUELTY AND SHEER PHYSICAL DOMINANCE OF HIS BABBOON BRETHREN

KRAK

BUT NO ONE LIKES A BULLY

SHALL WE PLAY A NEW GAME, MALCOLM?

OOH?

CRICKET, PERHAPS?

THRAK

OOP!

THROUGHOUT ALL SIMON SLEEPS FITFULLY

HIS FEVERED RAVINGS ARE NO LESS COHERENT THAN THE ANGRY HOOTS OF MAL AND H.S BAND OF MONKEYSHINES

OFF YOU GO NOW!

AND STAY AWAY UNTIL YOU'VE MASTERED YOUR MANNERS!

I SHOULDN'T FUSS SO OVER A SEA DRENCHED JOURNAL

A DISTRACTION, REALLY

RECOLLECTIONS AND REFLECTIONS OF OUR MOST PROFOUND EXCURSIONS THE FLIGHT FROM DOOMED GOSSAMER ADEPT IF ONLY TO ACCOUNT FOR OUR PRESENT STATE AS CASTAWAYS MAROONED ON THIS DISTANT SPECK OF WINDSWEPT BEACH

THE MANY MURDERS IN DEVONSHIRE DOWN

THE KILGRAVE GIANT

THE LADY WITH THE CRIMSON MONOCLE

THE AFFAIR OF THE ENIGMATIC PRISM

AND THAT'S JUST SCRATCHING THE SURFACE OF SIMON ARCHARD AND EMMA BISHOP'S ALL TOO BRIEF PARTNERSHIP IN SLEUTHING

THE REST IS MERELY MY NOVICE ATTEMPTS AT CATEGORIZING THE FLORA AND FAUNA OF OUR ISLAND PRISON

LEAFY PALM FRONDS, THIEVING BABBOONS AND VARIOUS ORDERS OF GARGOYLES SPIED FROM A SAFE DISTANCE

WHY THEY DON'T JUST LIGHT OFF AND FLY FAR AND AWAY FROM THIS JUNGLE PURGATORY I'LL NEVER KNOW

BUT WHO AM I TO PROFFER ADVICE ON THE MERITS OF AVIONICS?

APPARENTLY I SINK LIKE A STONE FROM THE AIR AS WELL AS IN THE SEA

WHY IF NOT FOR SIMON

IS THAT SELF-PITY, EMMA?

PERHAPS I SHOULD JUST MARCH TO THE ROUTINE TO WHICH I HAVE BECOME ACCUSTOMED

ONCE MORE UNTO THE INTERIOR OF THE DARK CANOPY FOR FOOD AND FRESH WATER FROM THIS COOL SPRING

I FIND IT ODD THAT NO OTHER CREATURES FIND THIS OASIS AS PALATABLE

DO NOT PREDATORS AND PREY OFTEN FREQUENT THE SAME WATERING HOLE?

WISHFUL THINKING EMMA

YOU ARE QUITE ALONE IN THIS GARDEN

EXCEPT FOR THE BABBOONS

AND PERHAPS THE OBLIGATORY SERPENT?

AND FROM WHAT I'VE SEEN OR PERHAPS NOT SEEN THAT IS PURE CONJECTURE

SNAK

ARE THERE TRULY VENOMOUS AND HUNGRY BEASTIES SLITHERING ABOUT IN AMBUSH?

S SOMEONE THERE?

OR HAS BOREDOM AND DESPAIR DRIVEN MY MIND TO FANTASY?

RIGHT

I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THE FRUIT FROM THAT TREE ANYWAY

NOTHING IS WATCHING YOU EMMA

THERE IS ONLY THE ROUTINE

NOTHING MORE

VENTURE INTO THE CANOPY

BRING BACK FOOD AND FRESH WATER TO SUSTAIN SIMON AND YOU

JUST THE TWO OF US

UTTERLY ALONE ON THIS ISLAND

EXCEPT FOR THE BABBOONS, OF COURSE

THOSE MALICIOUS AND MALODOROUS MONKEYS

BUGGER ALL!

MALCOLM!

OOKA!

WITHOUT MY MAKESHIFT CUDGEL THESE WATER FILLED PALM NUTS MAKE FOR SERVICEABLE MORNINGSTARS

KLUD

NO

BOLAS

I'LL TRIP YOU UP AND MAKE MONKEY-STEW OF YOU MAL!

REE! REE!

WHAT? THE OPEN BEACH?

OOK! OOP! OOO!

SILLY SILLY BABBOONS, I...

--GET DOWN IS WHAT, LASSIE!

WUG!

GRONK

OOK-ACKKK...

THAT CAN'T BE A GARGOYLE

NOT SO CLOSE

NOT SO

SO LARGE

GRONK!

UP YOU GO, LASSIE!

LET'S RETIRE BEFORE THAT GRONK RUNS OUT OF MONKEY MEAT!

WHO ARE YOU?!

HIGH STEP IT FOR THE JUNGLE BOSS!

I'VE GOT THE FIRE, THEO!

GRONK'S TOO BIG TO FOLLOW US BOSS!

SHE'LL CLIP ER WINGS FER CERTAIN!

GRONK

STIRRED UP THE LOT OF 'EM THEO

BE ON YOUR TOES WINK

WE SHOULD *PARSE OUT* OUR DARING RESCUES

AND JUST *WHO* S MY DARING RESCUER?

YOU JUST SAID IT MISS

DARE

THEOPHILUS DARE

PERHAPS YOU'VE *HEARD* OF ME?

THIS IS SORT OF MY STOCK IN TRADE

WHAT?

WAYLAYING HELPLESS CAPTIVES AND SNUFFING SIGNAL FIRES?

ONLY THE ONES SIGNALLING THOSE LEATHERY BEASTIES TO *SUPPER*, LASSIE

BUT YOU CAN THANK ME AFTER YOU'VE MET THE BOYS, MISS

BISHOP

EMMA BISHOP

WELL THEN, *MISS EMMA BISHOP*, PLEASE MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF *DARE'S DODGERS*

WINK

SCATTERGUN

PRINCELY BOB

HUNCHER

BITSY

GRONK

WELL THAT'S A NEW ONE

RIGHT *TENACIOUS* ONE SHE IS THEO

WE'LL BE SAFER *FURTHER* INTO THE CANOPY MISTRESS BISHOP

ARE YOU *SURE*?

I HAD ASSUMED THAT ANY PREDATORS WOULD KEEP TO THE INTERIOR WHERE FOOD WAS MORE PLENTIFUL

. NOT FOLLOW ME AND MY LEAVINGS SO CLOSE TO THAT UNFORGIVING SEA

=SNUFF=
=SNUFF=

I WONDER WHO WILL LEAD THE BABBOON TROOP WITH MALCOLM MAKING FOR INDIGESTION IN THAT MONSTERS BELLY?

HOO!

NIPPER?

REEK!

HAS HE FORTITUDE ENOUGH TO BECOME THE ALPHA?

DOUBTFUL

THERE'S ALWAYS A BIGGER BULLY IN THE BAND

SNAK

RAH!

THAT SHOULD DO IT BOYS!

TAKE A LOAD OFF AND WATCH THE PERIMETER WHILE THE PRETTY LASSIE EAT HES HER BREATH

THAT BIT OF BUSINESS BACK ON THE BEACH OUGHT TO CONVINCE HER TO TAKE HOLIDAY ELSEWHERE

I DON'T UNDERSTAND

WE'VE BEEN HERE NEARLY A FORTNIGHT AND THE GARGOYLES HAVE NEVER ATTACKED BEFORE

WE?

YES A *TRAVELING COMPANION* AND MYSELF OF COURSE

JUST THE TWO OF US

WE'RE REFUGEES FROM THE DOWNED AIRSHIP *GOSSAMER*

SOLE SURVIVORS?

JUST THE *TWO* OF YOU?

AND WHERE IS THIS TRAVELING COMPANION? NOT *ANOTHER* PRETTY LASSIE ON HOLIDAY TO THE SOUTHERN ISLES?

ON THE CONTRARY

THIS IS A *BUSINESS* EXPEDITION

WHAT *SORT* OF BUSINESS MISTRESS BISHOP?

MY PARTNER SIMON ARCHARD AND I WERE EN ROUTE TO THE SITE OF THE LAST PENBERTHY EXCAVATIONS

SIMON ARCHARD?!

IN THE FLESH!

SIMON!

GADZOOKS, MAN!

YOU LOOK NEAR TO DEATH WARMED OVER!

The PENNY ARCADIAN
piously Illustrated
Afternoon Edition, Price One Penny
RCHARD DOWNED & DROWNED?
DEATH BECOMES HIM
SIMON ARCHARD, LOST AT SEA AND NO LONGER TROUBLING PARTINGTON WITH HIS ILL ADVISED INVESTIGATIONS
YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT STRATHMORE
I MOST CERTAINLY DO
NEVERTHELESS WE MUST ASSUME THAT ARCHARD IS MERELY MISSING
WHAT SAY YOU CAPTAIN SPATSWORTH?
YES, CAPTAIN
DID ARCHARD GO DOWN WITH THE SHIP?
I WAS UNCONSCIOUS, MISTER STRATHMORE
I CAN NEITHER CONFIRM NOR DENY ARCHARD'S DEMISE
GENTLEMEN I SUGGEST QUITE STRONGLY THAT WE PLAY DOWN ARCHARD'S FATE
CONTINUED COVERAGE OF HIS DISAPPEARANCE IN THE ARCADIAN CAN ONLY BE CENSE FOR PARTINGTON'S CRIMINAL ELEMENT TO COMMIT A MOST ANY CHICANERY IMAGINEABLE
OR WORSE
T.C.O.A.M.
Private Wake
A TOAST, GENTS!
TO THE LATE SIMON ARCHARD!
NEVER AGAIN WILL THAT DAMNABLE DETECTIVE FOIL THE CONSORTIUM OF AGGRIEVED MANSERVANTS!
HERE HERE!
I FOR ONE FIND OUR CELEBRATIONS PREMATURE AFTER LOSING THE VERY IMPORTANT LIST
SO VERY SHORTSIGHTED, PENNYWICK!
WE'LL START A NEW AND MORE DESPICABLE LIST!
BUT WHAT ABOUT ALL OUR HARD WORK?
THE WORK WAS VERY HARD
OH WE SHAN'T NEED THAT AVENUE NOW
SIMON ARCHARD'S RESIDENCE MAY AS WELL BE A MAUSOLEUM
JUST ANOTHER HOUSE FOR THE DEAD
SAY IT ISN'T SO OPHELIA
ALRIGHT THEN IT ISN'T SO
BUT DAB YOUR TEARS AND FACE REALITY ALL OF YOU
ARE WE NOT ARCHARD'S AGENTS?
SIMON WOULD WANT NO, SIMON WOULD EXPECT US TO CONTINUE IN HIS STEAD
RIGHT, PETE?
S'POSE, MIZ PRESSMONK
YOU CAN COUNT ON ME
Mmmm AND ME
I CAN'T BELIEVE HESSS JUSSST GONE
SO DOS'N CHARGE THEN?
M? MISTER HOODY?
I AM
DA BOSS LEFT ME IN CHARGE
AN I SAY WE OUGHTA JUS WAIT FOR HIM TO COME BACK
HE ALWAYS COMES BACK

WHY I BET DA BOSS IS HAVIN HISSELF A *GRAND* TIME SOMEWHERES WITH MISS EMMA!

IT'S TOO QUIET

WOULD YOU PREFER JUNGLE DRUMS AND SAVAGE RITUALS OLD BOY?

DESPITE WHAT YOU MAY HAVE HEARD, GARGOYLES HUNT BY THE LIGHT OF DAY

ANYONE CARE FOR A MORSEL OF ROAST BABBOON?

IT'S AN OLD FAMILY RECIPE!

HA HA HA HAHAHAHA HAHA!

NOW THEN, ARCHARD YOU WERE TELLING US HOW YOU HAD ROUTED THOSE SALTRY SHIP WRECKERS IN BALEEN

I REALLY CAN'T THANK YOU *ENOUGH* FOR THAT

I'M NOT SURE I TAKE YOUR *MEANING*, MISTER DARE

PLEASE I'M SIMPLY THEO TO ANY OF MY CHUMS PRESENT COMPANY *INCLUDED*

WITH BALEEN BACK IN BUSINESS I CAN RESUME SHIPPING ANTIQUITIES ONCE MORE

YOU'VE TAKEN OVER THE PENBERTHY DIGS?

THEN I AM TO ASSUME THAT YOU ARE IN THE *EMPLOY* OF MIRANDA CROSS

MIRANDA *WHO?*

ARCHARD MY CHUM THEOPHILUS DARE IS THE CAPTAIN OF H.S. OWN INDUSTRY

AND DARE'S DODGERS WORK STRICTLY *FREELANCE*, IF YOU TAKE MY MEANING

MERCENARIES HOW QUAINT

WELL SIMON IT WOULD APPEAR THAT ALL ROADS DO NOT LEAD TO MIRANDA CROSS

AND JUST AS WELL

NOW TELL US AGAIN HOW YOU HAD TO BURY POOR MISTRESS BISHOP *ALIVE!*

HAHAHA HAHAHA HAHA HAHA

GO AHEAD SIMON

REGALE THEM WITH YOUR *EXPLOITS*

IT'LL DISTRACT DARE AND HIS DODGERS LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO BATHE WITHOUT LEERING *VOYEURS*

♫♫♫

I'LL JUST HAVE TO TAKE MY CHANCES WITH ANY NOCTURNAL BEASTS OF PREY

SNUFF SNUFF

HURR...

ON THE SIXTEENTH DAY WE ARRIVED AT THE PENBERTHY EXCAVATION SITE

GRONK!

SUCH AS IT IS

IT'S *INHABITED?*

ON THE *CONTRARY,* CHUM.

THE ENTIRE IS, AND IS A HOTBED FOR THERMAL ACTIVITY

THE PLUMES ARE MERELY VOLCANIC VENTING FROM DEEP UNDERGROUND FARTHER THAN WE'VE EVER VENTURED TO, or *EXCAVATE*

IT'S A CITY OF THE DEAD

WHY, I PERSONALLY HYPOTHESIZE THAT THE PREVIOUS CULTURE WAS LIKELY EATEN OFF BY GARGOYLES

THEY DO GROW QUITE *LARGE* HERE, AS THE LASSIE THERE WILL SURELY ATTEST

AS DO YOUR TALES, MISTER DARE

THE GARGOYLES OF PARTINGTON ARE CERTAINLY LESS *MENACING*

AND FROM WHERE DO YOU THINK THOSE BEASTS *CAME,* ARCHARD?

I'VE HUNTED THE BREADTH OF ARCADIA, FROM POLE TO POLE

AND I'VE ONLY EVER SPIED SUCH BEASTS IN *TWO* PLACES

FAIR PARTINGTON AND *THIS* SWELTERING HOTHOUSE

BUT NEVER THE GROUNDS BOB

UPON MY MEMORY FAIR PARTINGTON'S BESTIARY IS LIMITED TO *PECKS* AND *SHIMS* AT BEST

MAYBE A *RAKE,* BUT NEVER AS LARGE AND NASTY AS OUR FLAPPING FRIENDS HERE

BEST YA CARRY SUMPIN TO *STICK* 'EM WIT, MISSY

WINK'S BEJEWELED DAGGER SHOULD BE DISPLAYED AS AN ARTIFACT OF AN EXTINCT CULTURE, NOT SLUNG IN MY BELT FOR *PROTECTION*

LIGHT IT UP, BOYS!

AND THEOPHILUS DARE IS LESS AN ARCHAEOLOGIST THAN A BOASTFUL GRAVEROBBER SCAVENGING WITH BLASTING OIL IN LIEU OF A PICKAXE

BARBARIANS.

THIS ISLAND ISN'T ALONE IN VENTING HOT AIR

REMEMBER BOYS

LARGEST STONES ARE *MINE*

WHILE DARE'S DODGERS HUNT FOR TREASURE, I HEAD FOR HIGHER GROUND FAR REMOVED FROM THE BLAST RADIUS

DESPITE THE CITY'S APPARENT ABANDONMENT THE GLYPHS CARVED INTO THIS MUD SEEM ALMOST PRISTINE AND FREE OF EROSION

THE PICTOGRAMS RESEMBLE THE BINTEC ALPHABET

IN THE HALO OF BLUE WHEN

NO

IF THE DEMON RETURNS

GRACK!

EEEEEEE!

THAT SCREAM

TAKE UP YOUR GUNS, BOYS!

SOUNDS AS IF THE LASS IS IN TROUBLE AGAIN!

PUT ME DOWN!

TEUSAN IMTUK UT!

BECHUPA!

BECHUPA!

SIMON!

I CAN BARELY SEE FROM THE VAPORS

WERE THOSE MEN BELOW?

MEN SWEEPING THE EDGES OF THIS PIT?

THE SOUNDS CAME FROM THIS WAY!

I SHOULD WARN YOU, ARCHARD, WE MAY BE TOO LITTLE AND TOO LATE

GRONKS EAT FAST AND WITH FEW TABLE MANNERS

MISS B. SHOP'S CHANCES DWINDLE WITH THE SECONDS

WHERE?!

TOO LATE WE ARE

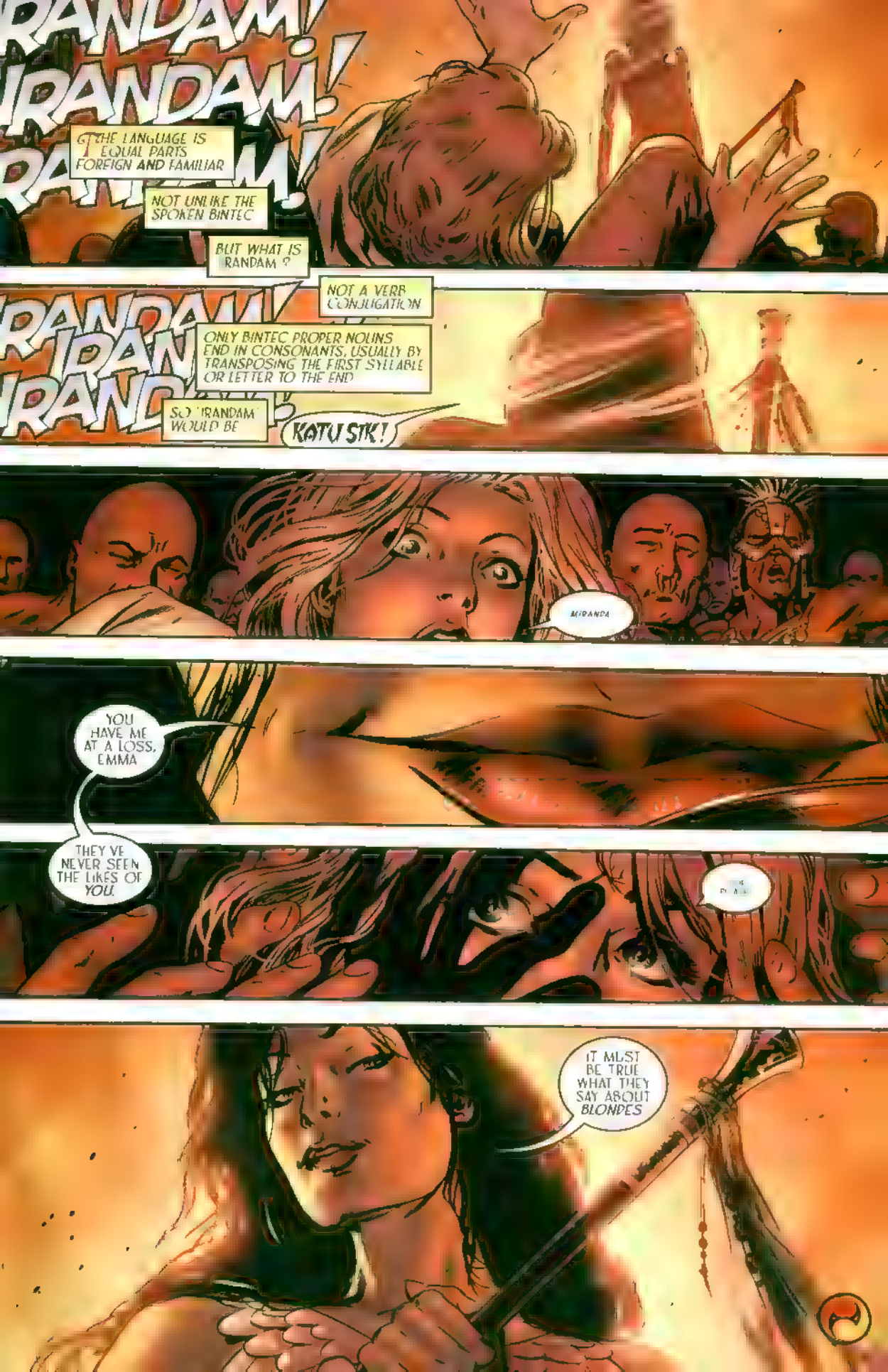
I RECKON THE BEAST FLEW OFF TO EAT HER ELSEWHERES

NO

THEY'VE GONE TO GROUND

UNHAND ME THIS INSTANT!

IRANDAM! IRANDAM! IRANDAM!


RANDAM!
RANDAM!
THE LANGUAGE IS EQUAL PARTS FOREIGN AND FAMILIAR
NOT UNLIKE THE SPOKEN BINTEC
BUT WHAT IS RANDAM ?
NOT A VERB CONJUGATION
ONLY BINTEC PROPER NOUNS END IN CONSONANTS, USUALLY BY TRANSPOSING THE FIRST SYLLABLE OR LETTER TO THE END
SO 'IRANDAM WOULD BE
KATU STK!
MIRANDA
YOU HAVE ME AT A LOSS, EMMA
THEY'VE NEVER SEEN THE LIKES OF YOU.
IT MUST BE TRUE WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT BLONDES

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BANK BRIGANDS BAGGED!

OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

THE CITY'S FAVORITE SON?
HIS MIND IS RAZOR-SHARP

EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY,
HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

MIRANDA CROSS

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR,
BUT FROM *WHERE* OR *WHEN*?

CROMBIE FOLLOWS FOOTPRINTS STRAIGHT TO FELONS!

Last evening the Federated Savings and Trust of Partington suffered what would have been the greatest single bank robbery in the city's history if not for the elucidation of detective Iain Crombie, who led a small force of Partington constables to nab the gang of robber rogues.

Crombie, new to our fair community, has very ably filled the gap left by sleuth Simon Archard's apparent death at sea. Demonstrating his own highly developed deductive skills, Mister Crombie — as aided by his assistant Charity Wyndham — ferreted out significant clues at the scene of the nocturnal looting which revealed that the industrious thieves had taken advantage of Partington's underground upheavals to tunnel directly into the central vault of the Federated Savings and Trust. There, the brigands succeeded in filling their looting bags with thousands of bank notes once safeguarded by the bank.

What's more, these careful criminals took time to remove and replace flooring tiles in their passage. But, as Crombie discovered quite quickly, the fastidious felons did not bother to wipe their shoes of subterranean soil, thus leaving incriminating tracks and subsequently leading Crombie, Wyndham, and the constabulary through a warren of underground passages to the marauders' hidey-hole...**PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE**

THE SCENE OF THE CRIME
CONSTABLES GUARD CRIME SCENE

NO HOPE FOR ARCHARD?
GOSSAMER INVESTIGATION CLOSED

Authorities investigating the explosive disaster, downing, and demise of the airship Gossamer submitted their final report to shareholders and administrators of the Leadbetter Zeppelin Company, Ltd., owner and operator of the doomed vessel. Sabotage was ruled as the leading cause for the dirigible's final, doomed flight, apparently carried out by a [illegible] employee. Several persons still missing in the once-great airship's crash in southern Arcadian waters.

Also unaccounted for are the celebrated detective Simon Archard — a subject of many public debates of late — and Archard's assistant Emma Bishop. Dispatches have gone out to all seafaring vessels in the vicinity of the crash to cast a watchful eye for any sign of survivors. However, much of the Southern Sea remains uncharted, full of remote atolls likely teeming with cannibals or more terrible perils.

The Arcadian Geographic Concern has offered up its roster of explorers to mount an expeditionary search for Partington's formerly favorite son, but only if sufficient funds can be raised for necessary provisions...**PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE**

As it May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

CGE™

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SHE'S GONE, ARCHARD
AND I VERY SINCERELY DOUBT HER SCALY ABDUCTOR WILL LEAVE YOU ANY TELL-TALE CLUES SAVE FOR A FEW GNAWED BONES..
..AND THE MARROW SUCKED CLEAN
TELL ME TRUE, MISTER DARE
YOU USE NO BRUSH OR TROWEL IN YOUR EXCAVATIONS
JUST BLASTING OIL, CORRECT?
A MOST DIRECT ROUTE TO ANY VALUABLE ARTIFACTS OR FOSSILIZED CURIOSITIES?
NOW SEE HERE, ARCHARD!
MY ARCHEOLOGICAL METHODS MAY BE UNORTHODOX TO BE SURE --
BUT YOU CAN'T HOLD ME TO BLAME THAT YOUR PRETTY YOUNG ASSISTANT IS NOW AN UNWILLING DINNER COMPANION TO A GRONK!
ON THE CONTRARY, DARE
YOUR ARCHEOLOGICAL METHODS OR LACK THEREOF GIVE ME SOME SMALL GLIMMER OF HOPE THAT EMMA IS JUST A COMPANION AND NOT THE MAIN COURSE
THE EDGES OF THIS PIT ARE SWEPT CLEAN, AND NEITHER BY PREVAILING WINDS NOR YOUR EXACTING CARE FOR HISTORICAL PRESERVATION
WHOEVER OR WHATEVER SNATCHED EMMA FLED DOWN THERE
AND SOMEONE OR SOMETHING BRUSHED THEIR TRACKS TO OBSCURITY BEHIND THEM AS THEY FOLLOWED SUIT
HOGWASH!
I TELL YOU, THIS ISLAND'S UTTERLY UNINHABITED SAVE FOR US, THE BABOONS, THE GARGOYLES WHO EAT THE BABOONS, AND PRETTY LASSES WHO WANDER TOO FAR FROM MEN WITH GUNS WHO SHOOT THE AFOREMENTIONED BABOONS AND GARGOYLES.
THERE'S NOTHING DOWN THAT HOLE BUT VOLCANIC GASSES AND MUD HOT ENOUGH TO BOIL THE FLESH FROM YOUR BONES.
MUD, I TELL YOU!

MUD

AN ENTIRE CITY OF IT

MADE OF IT

BUILT ATOP A WRITHING MOLTEN SEA OF IT

I AM REMINDED OF TERMITES AND THEIR TALL VENTING TOWERS, ENTIRE CITIES OF INSECTS LIVING THEIR LIVES UNDERGROUND WHILE WHOLE GENERATIONS NEVER SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY

EACH TO HIS OWN TASK AND ALL EXISTING MERELY TO SERVE THEIR QUEEN

MAY I PRESENT THE NEW QUEEN?

I FEEL RIDICULOUS.

BUT YOU LOOK ABSOLUTELY *SCRUMPTIOUS*, YOUR HIGHNESS

ALL EYES WILL BE UPON *YOU* AT THE SACRIFICIAL FEAST

COMPLIMENTS DO LITTLE TO DIMINISH MY TREPIDATION

MIRANDA

I TRUST ANTAEUS WASN'T TOO MUCH OF A BOTHER GUARDING YOU AS THE HANDMAIDENS ATTENDED YOUR FITTING

Oh HE WAS THE PERFECT GENTL--uh-- *GRONK*

I JUST ASSUMED THAT LEERING AND DROOLING WERE QUITE NATURAL FOR HIM

--THOUGH QUITE *UNSETTLING* FOR THE NATIVE PEOPLE

FEAR RELIEVES THESE HEATHENS OF THEIR BASER DRIVES, EMMA

AND YOU PRIDE YOURSELF ON BEING THEIR *FEARMONGER?*

ACTUALLY, I LIKEN MYSELF MORE TO A *LAWGIVER*

OR AN OCCASIONAL *WARDEN*

RANK HATH ITS PRIVILEGES, AFTER AL.

YOU DIDN'T ACCOUNT FOR *THIS* REVERSAL OF FORTUNE, THOUGH

A QUEEN MOST CERTAINLY *TRUMPS* A BARONESS

DON'T BE FOOLED BY THIS *PRETENSE,* EMMA

RANDAM EGATENAM?

YOU'RE MERELY A *CURIOSITY*

AN OTHERWISE COMMON BEAUTY DIPPED IN GOLD AND OFFERED UP AS A *GILDED TROPHY* FOR THEIR *TRUE LIEGE*

ME

THE ONE WHO BRINGS LAW

THE ONE WHO ENFORCES LAW

MAY THE QUEEN ASK A QUESTION?

THE OLD MAN WHY DOES HE ALONE APPROACH WHEN THE OTHERS KEEP THEIR DISTANCE?

THE STORYTELLER'S EYES ARE FAILING

HE MUST SEE TO BELIEVE

IRANDAM EGATEN NAKARU S TA

HE MUST BELIEVE TO TELL

FACT OR FICTION, BARONESS CROSS?

ANCIENT HISTORY, QUEEN-EMMA-THE-FIRST . AND-LAST

ARONCH OMNIPO!

SHALL I INTERPRET FOR YOU?

WINK, SCATTERGUN, AND HUNCHER WILL FOLLOW US DOWN

THE REST OF YOU DODGERS WILL STAY ABOVE AND WATCH FOR ANY MORE ROGUE GRONKS

OR HAUL ME OUT OF THIS HELLHOLE IF I BREAK MY NECK

EASY CLIMB, BOSS

HAVE HOLDS AND NOOKS TO JAM YER FEET SOLID, eh, MISTER ARCHARD?

EVIDENTLY SO, HUNCHER

AND CURIOUSLY *CONVENIENT* FOR A LOST AND FORGOTTEN CITY ON SUCH A DESERTED ISLE

IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE LONG AGO INHABITANTS EVEN HAD *FORETHOUGHT* TO LIGHT OUR WAY WITH WHAT COULD VERY WELL BE ETERNAL FLAMES

THAT'S QUITE ENOUGH, ARCHARD

I THOUGHT THAT YOU AND I HAD BECOME *CHUMS*.

BUT I WON'T HAVE YOU BESMIRCH ME IN FRONT OF THE DODGERS

AN *APT* MONIKER, MISTER DARE

DAMN *SWELTERIN'* DOWN 'ERE, THEO!

WHAT NOW THEN, ARCHARD?

DO WE SIT ABOUT AND TAKE IN THE SOOTHING VAPORS?

NO, THEOPHILUS

WE SEARCH FOR ANY TRACE OF EMMA'S PASSAGE THROUGH THESE VENTS.

FOR SOMETHING SHE MIGHT'VE DROPPED, ARCHARD?

YES, THE VERY THING

AND WHAT IF SHE LEFT NO SUCH *TRAIL* OF *CRUMBS* BEHIND TO MARK THE WAY TO HER RESCUE?

DO WE JUST FOLLOW THESE TORCHES TO THE VERY *CENTER* OF ARCADIA?

OR HAVE YOU STOPPED TO CONSIDER THAT THESE RUINS ARE DESERTED FOR A *REASON*?

THE EXTREME AND INHOSPITABLE TEMPERATURES, PERHAPS?

I WOULD VENTURE THAT THE DENIZENS OF THIS DEEP PLACE LEFT THE LIGHTS ON FOR A REASON AS WELL

LAMPS TO READ BY, PERHAPS

LOOKS A BIT LIKE THE *WOODCUTS* IN PENNY DREADFULS, MISTER ARCHARD

INDEED, SCATTERGUN

EACH OF THESE PICTURES TELLS PART OF A STORY

IN WHAT INDECIPHERABLE LANGUAGE?

I'M AFRAID THAT LINGUISTICS IS *MISS BISHOP'S* AREA OF EXPERTISE

..BUT TO BEGIN THE STORY YOU MUST FIRST SAY THE NAME

IRANDAM EGATEN CHU NEEPWA BACHOOM!

IRANDAM

MIRANDA

LIKE A BOLT FROM THE BLUE

NO...

APPEARING FROM NOWHERE NONEXISTENCE NEG

~DEMON GODDESS FROM WITHOUT HER LIGHTFIRE CONTAINED WITHIN A FORM MORE PALATABLE TO HER WORSHIP

SLAVES

BUT THE DEMONESS NEEDED A KEY TO ESCAPE THE EMPIRE OF CHAOS

A TALISMAN THROUGH WHICH TO FOCUS HER LIGHTFIRE

BUT A THING OF MAGIC DRAINED AND POWERLESS WHEN THE DOOR FLUNG SHUT BEHIND HER

SHE GAVE THEM A NAME

SHE GAVE THEM LAW

SHE GAVE THEM FEAR

AND THEN SHE LEFT

THE MIRANDANS THEN TOOK UP HER SPENT KEY AND ERECTED A GATE

HOPING SHE WOULD NEVER RETURN

BUT SHE DID

AND THOSE WHO BROKE HER LAW SUFFERED HER WRATH IN MOST INHUMAN WAYS

THOSE WHO LIVED

THE REST RETREATED TO ROILING MISERY UNDERGROUND AND HOPED, PRAYED THE DEMON GODDESS WOULD FORGET THEM

WOULD FIND OTHER SUBJECTS SLAVES MORE WORTHY OF HER LAWS

...MORE DESERVING OF HER LIGHTFIRE THAT BURNS SO COLD

OR SO THE STORY GOES

IT HAPPENED SO LONG AGO. THE OLD MAN ONLY HAS HIS FADING PICTOGRAMS TO SUPPLEMENT MEMORIES OF A YOUTH HE'D JUST AS SOON FORGET

IRANDAM NIK

IRANDAM NIK

NIK

SOME OF IT MIGHT BE MUDDLED IN THE TRANSLATION

BEINGS FROM OTHER WORLDS

LOST CIVILIZATIONS

MAGIC KEYS TO IMPOSSIBLE DOORWAYS

IT'S THE STUFF OF FANTASY

OBVIOUSLY, I CAN'T HAVE MY SECRET GETTING OUT

I'M SURPRISED THESE POOR SOULS HAVE ..VED SO LONG KNOWING SO TERRIBLE A SECRET

YOU DON'T STRIKE ME AS BE NG EITHER FORGIVING OR FORGETTING, MIRANDA

DEVOTEES ARE SOMETIMES MORE VALUABLE THAN SECRETS, DEAR EMMA

DON'T YOU MEAN SLAVES ?

THAT'S THE LITERAL TRANSLATION OF THEIR WORD

OR DO MY EARS DECEIVE ME?

IRANDAM! IRANDAM!

UPMANNA SOOK EITSAP RONCA!

TWO WORDS STAND OUT FROM THE NATIVE'S PLAINTIVE SHOUTS

CHA REEK SAITA UPMANNA!

ABOVE MEN MEN FROM THE SURFACE

SIMON AND DARE'S DODGERS UNDOUBTEDLY

THE MIRANDAN WARRIORS HEED HER WITHOUT QUESTION

BUT ARE THEY FIGHTING FOR MIRANDA, OR FLEEING FROM HER?

FLINT SPEARS ARE NO MATCH FOR GUNPOWDER, M RANDA

THEY'LL LOSE STEAM AFTER THE FIRST BULLET IS FIRED

THEY FEAR WORSE THINGS EMMA

ANTAEUS CAN ATTEST TO THAT

SHALL WE SHOW THE QUEEN AN A.TERNAT VE TO SIMPLY DY NG FOR ME, MY PET?

GRRRR...

HE WASN'T THE FIRST

IT TOOK A WH LE TO GET IT RIGHT

BUT HE'S CERTAINLY THE FINEST ABOMINATION I'VE EVER MOLDED FROM THESE PITIFUL MUD PEOPLE

RRRRR...

WHAT WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO HIM?

HOW SOON YOU FORGET, EMMA

DON'T YOU RECOGN ZE YOUR WINGED FRIEND?

GRUH... GRUH...

GRRRONK!

THERE ARE NO WORDS TO DESCRIBE THE MONSTER BEFORE ME

ANTAEUS, TOO

I HAD NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT MIRANDA'S MAGICAL MIGHT

EXPERIENCE HAD TAUGHT ME THAT HER PALE BLUE LIGHTFIRE EASILY MATCHED MY OWN ABILITIES.

I EVEN ACCOUNTED FOR THE POSSIBILITY THAT SHE WAS MY BETTER

. BUT I SORELY UNDER-ESTIMATED HER CAPACITY FOR EVIL

YOU'LL EXPERIENCE THIS HUNGER *FIRSTHAND* AS ANTAEUS FEASTS UPON YOU WHILE MY SUBJECTS WATCH

CONSIDER IT AN OBJECT LESSON IN *SACRIFICE*

AND THEN YOU'LL LEAVE THEM ALONE AGAIN FOR ANOTHER FEW DECADES?

YOUR ARGUMENT ON THE MERITS OF LEAVING NO ONE ALIVE TO REVEAL MY ORIGINS WAS QUITE *CONVINCING*

YOU WERE A FAIR AND WISE RULER IN YOUR TIME

I'M JUST AFRAID THAT *YOUR* TIME IS PAST

MIRANDA IS *HIDING* SOMETHING

BLAST THOSE SAVAGES OR WE'LL ALL BE *PINCUSHIONS*, FELLOWS!

PAKOW PAKOW PAKOW

DARE!

YOU'RE *NOT* TURNING COWARD ON US AND FIGHTING OUT!

YOU *WOUND* ME, ARCHARD!

I'M JUST SETTING A FUSILADE OF BLASTING OIL TO PUT A BIT OF MUD BETWEEN US AND THAT BLOODTHIRSTY LOT!

KABOOM

A LITTLE FASTER IF YOU PLEASE ARCHARD?!

JUST HOW *MUCH* OIL DID YOU USE?!

BULLY!

MY SUBTERFUGE *WORKED!*

DID IT?

YOU MAY HAVE SHIELDED US FROM THOSE SHARPENED SPEARS...

YOU *CREATED* GRONKS FROM MEN?!

WOMEN, TOO AND THEN THEY BRED THEIR OWN

HUMANS AND GARGOYLES AREN'T SO *DIFFERENT*, EMMA

THOUGH *ONE'S* APPETITES ARE CERTAINLY MORE *INSATIABLE*

AND *THEN*, DEAR EMMA, ANTAEUS WILL EAT *THEM*

WHEN FIRST WE MET, SHE BRAGGED OF BEING DRAWN TO ME LIKE A BEACON, HER TOUCH EFFECTING A TRANSFERENCE OF *POWER*

BUT NOW SHE ACTS AS IF MY MEAGER ENERGIES ARE BENEATH HER NOTICE AS SHE CAPERS ABOUT LIKE SOME SHAME LESS SAVAGE BEATING TIME UPON A JUNGLE DRUM WITH SIMON'S LOST CANE

LOST CANE?!

HOW DID SHE--?

BUT YOU'VE JUST AS SWIFTLY PUT A RIVER OF MOLTEN MUD BETWEEN US AND THE PATH TO EMMA

I *TOLD* YOU, ARCHARD

IF SHE HASN'T ALREADY, MISS BISHOP IS SLEEPING WITH A GRONK

AND S VERY LIKELY THE *MAIN COURSE*

GRRRONK!

STAY BACK, YOU YOU *BEAST!*

WOUND HIM WITH ANOTHER WORD EMMA

SURELY YOU CAN DO BETTER THAN THAT TO SPARE YOUR LIFE

IF MIRANDA'S POWER CAN MAKE A MONSTER

PERHAPS MY OWN MIGHT SERVE TO UNDO ONE

TRANSFERENCE

WHAT?!

GRRARK!

YOU ONCE WANTED TO *STEAL* MY POWER, MIRANDA?

WHAT'S CHANGED?

UNHAND ME!

I WOULD IF I COULD, DEMON GODDESS

DELICIOUS!

HER TOUCH

SO COLD

SO EMPTY OF LIFE

DO YOU FEEL THE ENERGIES FROTHING OVER, EMMA?

YOU TO ME

THE GROUND ITSELF APPLAUDS OUR DANCE!

MORE EXPLOSIONS?

DON'T LOOK AT ME

I USED UP MY LOT OF BLASTING OIL BEATING BACK THOSE NAKED SAVAGES!

PICK UP THE PACE, HUNCHER, MATE!

DIS DODGER'S DODGIN FALLIN ROCKS, PAL!

WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE! NOW!

GO ON WITHOUT ME, DARE

AND DO *WHAT*, MAN?

LEAVE YOU TO SIMMER IN THIS COLOSSAL MUD BATH?

EMMA'S STILL DOWN THERE

THERE'S A WORLD UP ABOVE *FULL* OF PRETTY ASS STANTS, ARCHARD!

SHE'S MY *PARTNER*

OR SHE WAS

GRONK

THAT WAS SIMPLY *INTOXICATING*

OUR TRANSFERENCE IS EVEN DRIVING ANTAEUS MORE *WILD*

WAS IT GOOD FOR *YOU*, EMMA?

NO

IT WASN'T AND I DOUBT IT EVER WILL BE

IF I CAN'T FIGHT LIGHTFIRE WITH FIRE, I'LL FIND ANOTHER WEAPON TO BEAT YOU

PERHAPS A BLUNT INSTRUMENT

SIMON'S CANE

YOU COULD ONLY HAVE GOTTEN IT FROM MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE

AND HE ONLY DESIRED IT FOR THE EMBLEMAT PRISM

YOUR KEY!

THAT'S WHY YOU HAD THE BALEEN SHIPS WRECKED!

THE PRISM WASN'T *IN* THE CANE SO YOU BELIEVED IT MIGHT STILL BE AMONG THE ARTIFACTS MINED HERE BY DARE'S MEN!

THOK

UNH!

GRRRR...

ANTAEUS! CEASE YOUR AIMLESS FLAPPING AND *EAT* HER!

GRONK

HE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ANSWERING YOUR CALL ANY LONGER, MIRANDA

THE TRANSFERENCE!

YOU'VE SOMEHOW NEGATED MY CONTROL OF HIM!

NOT MY INTENTION

BUT I'LL CERTAINLY TUCK THAT IDEA AWAY FOR ANOTHER TIME

IF THERE IS TO BE ANOTHER TIME

I, HOWEVER, AM RESIGNED TO MY FATE

I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT SIMON AND THE DODGERS LIVE TO SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY ABOVE THESE VENTING MUD TOWERS ONCE MORE

BITSY!

PRINCELY BOB!

NARY A SIGN OF THEM, THEO

BOB LEFT HIS BLUNDERBUSS, BOSS!

GARGOYLES?

DID YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID, DARE?

I

T

WUOGA

GRRARK!

MAKE ANTAEUS LAND OR I'LL WALLOP YOU LIKE I WALLOPED THE BABOONS OF THIS MISERABLE ISLAND!

GIVE ME THAT, EMMA!

EMMA?

AND STILL UNEATEN!

LOOKIT THE SIZE O THAT ONE, BOYS!

IT'S A KING GRONK IF EVER THERE WAS ONE!

YOU'LL NOT STRIKE ME AGAIN LIKE SOME COMMON CHATTEL!

NO!

WITH SO MUCH OF MY ENERGIES DISSIPATED IN THE TRANSFERENCE, SIMON'S CANE WAS MY LAST RESOURCE

AND NOW IT'S LOST AGAIN

SNAK

GOT YOU, OLD FRIEND

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, DODGERS?

FOLLOW THAT GRONK!

GRRARK!
HURK
EMMA, DEAR, LET'S END THIS.
YOUR LIFE, I MEAN
ALL BUT MY THOUGHTS ARE PARALYZED BY THE TRANSFERENCE IN OUR TOUCH.
YET ANTAEUS RESPONDS IN JUST THE OPPOSITE FASHION
BEHAVE, ANTAEUS!
OR I'LL TRANSFORM YOU INTO SOMETHING EVEN MORE AWFUL!
HE'S TOO BEDAZZLED BY OUR DISPLAY OF MAGICKS TO HEED YOUR CALL, MIRANDA
OR NOTICE MY FALL FROM HIS LEATHERY HIDE
I'VE SPOKEN TOO SOON
DRAT!
ESCAPE IS THE RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION HERE, EMMA!
LET GRAVITY BE YOUR SALVATION!
BLOODY CREATURE DOESN'T WANT TO GIVE HER UP, DOES HE?
BUT I CAN'T SAY THAT SUCH A DROP WOULD DO MUCH TO EXTEND MISS BISHOP'S RUN OF LUCK
MAKIN' AN AWFUL RUCKUS, BOSS!
LIABLE TO STIR UP MORE GRONKS AND GRYPHS AND GOYLES THAT WAY!
FIRE YOUR GUNS ABOVE THEM, DODGERS!
SHE'LL HAVE A CHANCE IF HE SWOOPS CLOSE TO THE CANOPY AGAIN!
PAKOW PAKOW PAKOW
PAKOW PAKOW PAKOW PAKOW PAKOW
GRACK!
PAM
GREE! GREE!
I'VE HAD QUITE ENOUGH OF THIS RIDE
I PRAY I FIND SOMETHING SOFTER THAN THE GROUND TO BREAK MY FALL--
WHULP
HURR!

GRONK!

DID YOU DO YOU *SEE* THAT?

WHAT DO YOU THINK IT WAS, THEO?

SNAGGED HER

JUMPED R GHT UP

LIKE A BLOODY DAMN MONKEY!

HURRY!

I THINK IT WAS OUR TICKET *OFF* THIS PILE OF MUD, LADS

LOOKIT THE RUINS BOSS

TAIN'T MUCH LEFT BUT BUBBLIN' MUD

EMMA!

CHRGR

M M RANDA?

NOT AS IMPORTANT

AS ME?

AS THE THING WHO SPARED YOU FROM THAT HORRID HARPY

THE *GARGOYLE*, TOO

I REMEMBER ONLY THE SHOTS AND A... THOSE BEATING W NGS

BUT LEATHER NOT FEATHER

I I FOUND YOUR FAVORITE CANE

I KNOW.

YOU MUST FORGIVE MY ATT RE

GONE *NATIVE*, HAVE WE?

QUEEN FOR A DAY, ACTUALLY

..RELUCTANT MONARCH TO A PEOPLE WHOSE LIVES ENDED LONG AGO IN THE MUCK AND MIRE OF THIS REMOTE GATEWAY TO AN EVEN FOULER PLACE
I DOUBT MIRANDA AND HER PET MONSTER WILL RETURN TO THESE ENVIRONS NOW
HUNCHER WATCHED AS ANTAEUS FLEW OUT OVER THE SEAS AND DISAPPEARED FROM SIGHT
THE MISSING DODGERS WERE NEVER SEEN AGAIN
ON THE TWENTIETH DAY, A SHIP ARRIVED
FINALLY
WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW, MISTER DARE?
I SUPPOSE WE COULD ATTEMPT TO BLAST THROUGH ALL THAT DAMNABLE MUD...
BUT IT WOULD LIKELY TAKE FOREVER
I SUPPOSE YOU'LL HAVE NO TROUBLE FINDING ANOTHER BUSINESS VENTURE AS LUCRATIVE OR SO THRILLING TO CHALLENGE YOUR MOTLEY CREW OF DARING DOERS, THEOPHILUS
IF YOU DO GO SEARCHING ABOUT, PERHAPS YOU'LL COME ACROSS MY JOURNAL
I SEEM TO HAVE MISPLACED IT IN ALL THE EXCITEMENT
A JOURNAL, YOU SAY?
WE'LL CERTAINLY KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR A LOST BOOK
I WOULD VERY SINCERELY APPRECIATE IT
IT'S REALLY NO MORE THAN A RECOLLECTION OF THINGS PAST AND OUR TIME ON THIS ISLAND
SOME VERY AMATEUR SKETCHINGS OF THE MORE EXOTIC CREATURES
EXOTIC CREATURES, YOU SAY?
WHY, THE DODGERS AND I WERE THINKING ABOUT EXPLORING THAT VERY MARKET
I HEAR TELL THAT THERE'S QUITE A DEMAND FOR BEASTS NEVER BEFORE SEEN BY HUMAN EYES
OR US BY THEM
HURR

KEY ISSUE

RUSE

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ARCHARD ALIVE!

OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

THE CITY'S FAVORITE SON?
HIS MIND IS RAZOR-SHARP

EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY,
HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

ALVA REMAR

THE SINGING SENSARTION,
IS HE *MURDERER* OR *MARTYR*?

DETECTIVE DISCOVERED ON DESERTED ATOLL!

It pleases *The Penny Arcadian* to be the very first publication to disclose the happy news that detective Simon Archard has been found alive and well after weeks of speculation that Partington's favorite son perished along with the airship *Gossamer*, which succumbed to an explosive end high above the Southern Sea

Archard's assistant, Miss Emma Bishop, was also believed to have perished in the wreck of the *Gossamer*. However, thanks to trans-oceanic telegraphy, the rumors of Archard's and his associate's demises can now be laid to rest

Although details have yet to be disclosed, it appears that Archard and Bishop survived their fall into the briny depths and subsequently tread water until making landfall on the island of Irandoa, noted primarily as the cite of numerous excavations by the late archaeologist Clive Penberthy

Apparently, the renowned sleuth and his companion eked out a meager existence among the atoll's indigenous population of gargoyles and simian sub-species until discovered and given much-needed shelter by famed soldier-of-fortune and raconteur Theophilus Dare and his retinue of Arcadia-spanning adventurers.

Remarkably, after accompanying Dare and his celebrated "Dodgers" in resuming the long-idle Penberthy digs to plumb the depths of a long-forgotten island civilization, Archard and Bishop escaped a volcanic eruption and later found passage off Irandoa on the seafaring *Bountiful*, a sailing ship commanded by Captain Crispin Fletcher. •••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

ARSONIST PUT OUT!

SLEUTH SNUFFS FIERY FELON

The suspicious fires plaguing the Finnegan residential district have been both explained and extinguished for good thanks to an investigation undertaken by detective Iain •••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

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OFF YOU GO, GENTLE FOLK

NOTHIN' TA SEE HERE

OPEN AND *SHUT*, COMMISSIONER MORTON

WE HAVE THE *MOTIVE* WE HAVE THE *MEANS* AND WE HAVE THE CONFESSION OF THE *MURDERER*

WHAT'S *MORE*, THE YOUNG ONE EXAMINED THE SCENE OF THE CRIME AND IDENTIFIED CLUES TO *CONFIRM* IT ALL

MIGHTY OAK IS THAT?

IT IS, INDEED

CLIFTON FRIPPS

THE *REVIEWER*

WITH HIS THROAT CUT?

PIERCED, ACTUALLY

ALL THE WAY TO HIS BRAINPAN AND AVOIDING THE *JUGULAR*, HENCE THE RELATIVE DEARTH OF GUSHING BLOOD

PITY FOR *THE CLARION*, COMMISSIONER

DOWN BOTH A WRITER AND A HEADLINE OF SOME WIT

"CUTTHROAT CRITIC'S THROAT CUT!"

AND THE KILLER YOU NABBED?

WHO CARRIED OUT THIS SAVAGE CRIME?

THAT'S THE *RUB*, COMMISSIONER

THE CRITIC WAS DONE IN BY THE *SUBJECT* OF HIS OWN CRITICISM

ALVA ReMAR, THE OPERA SENSATION

AFRAID YOU'LL HAVE TO RIDE IN THE PADDY WAGON, MISTER ReMAR

I E EXPECT NO SPECIAL FAVORS

YOU'VE PATTED HIM DOWN, WOT, DONNY?

GAVE US 'IS BLADE WITHOUT A FUSS, LIEUTENANT

STILL WEARN' 'IS THEATRE COSTUME AND ALL, THO'

I COULD DO A *FRISKIN* IF IT PLEASES YE

PLEASE, LIEUTENANT

MY AUDIENCE LURKS ABOUT

IF I ASK ONE SMALL THING IT WOULD BE THAT YOU NOT LET ME SUFFER FURTHER INDIGNITY

BEYOND THE ACT OF *MADNESS* THAT BROUGHT ME TO THIS SAD STATE

VERY WELL

CLIMB UP THEN AND BE OUT OF THE CHILL, MISTER ReMAR

THOUGH I CAN'T PROMISE YOU THE REFORMATORY'S MORE THE LIFE OF LEISURE TO WHICH YOU'RE LIKELY *ACCUSTOMED*

I'VE SUFFERED A *PRISON* BEFORE

KNOW THAT I'M VERY SORRY FOR MISTER FRIPP.

I LOOK AT YOU IN *CHAINS*

YOU HAD EVERYTHING FAME AND MONEY BY THE *BUCKETFULS*

AND YOU HAD TO GO AND RUIN IT ALL

HE WAS TRYING TO BREAK UP THE ACT

IF ONLY HE *HAD*

MISTER ReMAR!

WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

I EXITED THE THEATRE AND SAW THE CONSTABLES LEADING YOU OFF IN IRONS LIKE SOME COMMON *CRIMINAL!*

HAVE I HAVE I MADE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE, MISS -

PRESSMONK

OPHELIA PRESSMONK

I'M YOUR BIGGEST FAN THE RANGE OF YOUR VOICE I THINK YOU'RE *DELIGHTFUL*

YOU ARE BOTH BEAUTIFUL AND KIND *OPHELIA PRESSMONK*

WHAT COULD WARRANT SUCH TREATMENT?

MURDER, MISS PRESSMONK

OF THE *FOULEST* KIND

IS THIS *TRUE?*

HE T' WASN'T ME

DID YOU *HEAR* HIM, COMMISSIONER?

HE SAID

WHAT THEY *ALL* SAY WHEN FACING THE REALITY OF LIFE IN A BOX

REMORSE TOO LITTLE AND TOO LATE

WHAT A *HANDSOME* COUPLE YOU MAKE COMMISSIONER MORTON

SAYS *WHO?*

SURELY YOU'VE MET THE NEW YOUNG DETECTIVE, MISS PRESSMONK?

NO. I'VE NOT HAD THE *PLEASURE*

THEN MAY I PRESENT MISTER *IAIN CROMBIE* AND HIS GIRL FRIDAY, MISS *CHARITY WYNDHAM*

CHARMED

WE'RE IN ALL THE PAPERS

THIS TINY SPITFIRE WOULD BE MISS OPHELIA PRESSMONK, SISTER OF THE LATE CHEMIST OTTO PRESSMONK

AND ASSOCIATE OF THE ALSO LATE SIMON ARCHARD, MAY HIS SOUL REST EASY

ARE YOU HERE TO *DISPROVE* MISTER ReMAR'S INVOLVEMENT IN THIS CRIME, MISTER CROMBIE?

AND *CONTRADICT* MY OWN DEDUCTIONS, MISS PRESSMONK?

ReMAR WAS FOUND CLUTCHING THE MURDER WEAPON WHEN CONSTABLES INVESTIGATED CRIES OF HELP FROM THIS VERY ALLEYWAY

CLIFTON FRIPPS HIMSELF HELD A CLUTCH OF HAIR, NO DOUBT TORN FROM ReMAR'S OWN HEAD IN THEIR STRUGGLE.

EVEN YOUR MISTER ARCHARD WOULD CONCEDE THESE CLUES AS IRREFUTABLY *DAMNING* EVIDENCE

COMING, MISS WYNDHAM?

AFTER A MOMENT, IAIN.

YOU MUST *EXCUSE* HIS RUDENESS, MISS PRESSMONK

WE'RE MOST SORRY FOR THE LOSS OF MISTER ARCHARD

HIS ABSENCE HAS KEPT US QUITE HARRIED WITH *BUSINESS* AS I'M SURE YOU'RE AWARE

GOOD EVENING TO YOU

AND YOU

OH SIMON

'TIS AS THAT BASTARD AND HIS OH SO POLITE COLLEEN HAVEN'T *REPLACED* YOU

OR ARE YOU WELL AND TRULY LOST TO US AS SO MANY BELIEVE?

LOSSST AND *FOUND* LASSSSS

WHO'S THERE?!

SHOW YOURSELF OR I'LL CALL FOR THE BOBBIES!

IT'S ONLY *ME* MISSSSS PRESSSSSMONK

JUSSSST *LUCIUSSSS*

BUT I'D DRUTHER SSSTAY IN THE SSSHADOWS IF YOU DON'T MIND

THERE'S NEWS?

THE *BESSST* KIND

SIMON'S *ALIVE?!*

AYE

AND COMING HOME ASSSS BASSST ASSSS THE WIND

CRACK!

CERTAINLY NOT AS *IMPRESSIVE* AS THE GRONKS YOU LEFT BEHIND ON *IRANDOA*

WHAT SAY YOU, MISTER ARCHARD?

AN *UNDERSTATEMENT* TO BE SURE, CAPTAIN FLETCHER

I CAN'T SAY THAT I'LL EVER LOOK AT PARTINGTON'S GARGOYLES THE SAME WAY AGAIN.

BUT YOU'RE ASSUREDLY *GLAD* TO BE HOME?

INDEED

AND LIKELY ANXIOUS TO TRADE THE PITCH AND SWAY OF MY LADY *BOUNTIFUL* FOR MORE *SOLID* FOOTING.

OR IS IT TRUE WHAT'S BEEN *SAID* OF PARTINGTON

A TOWN FULL OF HOLES AND ERODED TO THE CORE?

A *TEMPORARY* IMPEDIMENT TO OUR FAIR CITY, CAPTAIN

IT'S AS THEY SAY

NATURE SCORNS THE VACUUM

AND HOLES ARE MERELY VACUUMS WAITING TO BE *FILLED*

AS YOUR FIRST MATE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY FILL YOUR BILLET WHEN YOU ONE DAY GIVE UP THE BRIDGE

ONE DAY

BUT NOT TODAY, MISTER ARCHARD

MEN OF OUR STATION ARE NOT SO EASILY REPLACED

OR ARE YOU NOT ANTICIPATING A *HERO'S* WELCOME UPON YOUR RETURN TO PART.NGTON?

I EXPECT THAT MY HOMECOMING ISN'T WIDELY *KNOWN*, CAPTAIN

REALLY NOW?

PERHAPS YOU SHOULD TAKE A LOOK AT THE PARTY WAITING TO *GREET* YOU, MISTER ARCHARD

YOU MIGHT GIVE CONSIDERATION TO ALLOWING MISS BISHOP THE COURTESY OF DEBARKING *FIRST*

IGHTBOURNE'S LACKEY!

PARTINGTO LEAST FAVORITE SON!

HOVE OFF SIMON!

not w

WHAT?

AND LET THIS UNRULY MOB REND ME LIMB FROM LIMB JUST TO REACH YOU, SIMON?

THANK YOU, BUT NO

AND HERE I THOUGHT WE LEFT THE SAVAGES BEHIND ON DISTANT IRANDOA

THEY CAN'T POSSIBLY BLAME *YOU* FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO PARTINGTON SIMON

EVERYONE KNOWS THE CATASTROPHIC TEMBLORS WERE ALL *LIGHTBOURNE'S* DOING

AND I WAS ONCE MALCOLM'S *APPRENTICE*

GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

WHERE IS THE *SCOUNDREL?!*

SHOULDA STAYED DEAD!

THERE!

WEARIN' A *BEARD!*

HE'S IN *DISGUISE*, HE IS!

PERHAPS WE SHOULD SEEK A CABBIE

OR A *MINDER* WITH VERY LARGE MUSCLES TO SHIELD US

SOMEONE LIKE—

—PETE?

YER ALIVE!

I WAS

THOUGH LIKELY NOT MUCH LONGER IF YOU CONTINUE TO SQUEEZE ME SO

I SEE THINGS ARE MUCH *CHANGED* IN PARTINGTON SINCE WE DEPARTED

BEEN A *KILLIN'*, SIMON

BEST WE TALK ABOUT IT ON THE *HOOF*, THOUGH

I FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT I AM THE PRIME SUSPECT

NAH, NOT YOU TALL

OPHELIA, WOULD YOU PLEASE TAKE THE BURDEN OFF PETE AND *HASTEN* THIS DIALOGUE?

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO PARTINGTON *NOW?*

IT'S DIFF CULT TO SAY

TRY

AN INNOCENT AND WONDERFUL MAN HAS BEEN FALSELY ACCUSED OF MURDER AND YOU'VE LOST PRACTICALLY ALL FAVOR IN THE COMMUNITY EXCEPT FOR THE AGENTS OF COURSE AND A FEW LOYAL ALLIES WHO ARE MOSTLY INDEBTED TO YOU

—BUT I'VE PUT A PLAN IN MOTION TO HELP *BOTH* CAUSES!

WITH *THIS* YOU CAN BEGIN REBUILDING YOUR REPUTATION IN THE COMMUNITY

BY ATTENDING THE OPERA?

3 HEARTS.
2 VOICES.
1 LOVE.

BY SEEKING OUT *JUSTICE*

AH, OPHELIA

YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT

EVER THE DRAMA QUEEN

ALWAYS JOSTLING FOR CENTERSTAGE

THE LIMELIGHT SHINES SO *LITTLE* IN HERE, DOESN'T IT?

SHUT UP

WHY WOULD YOU GO AND ALLOW THEM TO PLUCK YOUR HAIR?

TO PROVE MY INNOCENCE

IF SUCH A THING CAN BE *PROVEN*, YOU'LL HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITH MURDER!

I DIDN'T MURDER ANYONE

YOU *DID*

SAYS WHO?

THE PRETTY LITTLE THING WITH THE COPPERY WHISKERS?

SHUT UP!

ARCHARD ALIVE!

DETECTIVE DISCOVERED ALIVE ON DESERTED ATO...!

THAT'S AN *ISLAND* AND ALL!

THIS IS AN OUTRAGE!

POLICE

COMMISSIONER MORTON I MUST *PROTEST!*

HOW DARE YOU ALLOW THIS MAN ARCHARD TO TREAD ALL OVER MY INVESTIGATION!

WITH *JOURNALISTS* PRESENT, NO LESS!

IAIN YOU'RE SHOUTING INDOORS AGAIN

I WON'T HAVE MY *CREDIBILITY* SUBVERTED SO THAT THE GREAT SIMON ARCHARD CAN PLACATE HIS DWARFISH LITTLE CONCUBINE!

HAVE YOU EVER *MET* SIMON ARCHARD, YOUNG MISTER CROMBIE?

TO DATE, I'VE NOT BEEN SO *BLESSED*

IAIN CROMBIE

SIMON ARCHARD

A *BLESSING* TO BE SURE

I... um

GENTLEMEN—
I BEG YOUR PARDON, MISS BISHOP
SINCE YOU SUMMONED US TO THIS PRESENTATION, THE FLOOR IS DESERVEDLY *YOURS*
THANK YOU, MISS WYNDHAM
MISTER CROMBIE
WE ASKED YOU HERE TODAY SO THAT YOU MIGHT *SHARE* IN THE FRUITS OF SIMON'S SLEUTHING INTO THE UNTIMELY DEATH OF CLIFTON FRIPPS
ANOTHER MAN'S LIFE IS AT STAKE, AFTER ALL
SIMON?
THANK YOU, MISS BISHOP.
I PROMISE TO BE *BRIEF*
HERE WE HAVE THE MURDER WEAPON
WHICH ALL PARTIES INVOLVED ARE AWARE WAS GIVEN OVER *FREELY* BY ALVA ReMAR, THE SELF-ADMITTED KILLER
WHAT'S PARTICULARLY *CURIOUS* IS WHY THE BLADE—
—WHICH I AM TO UNDERSTAND WAS RETRIEVED BY *GLOVED* CONSTABLES
IS MARKED BY *TWO* DIFFERENT FINGERPRINTS
FROM TWO DIFFERENT *INDIVIDUALS*, THAT IS
PREPOSTEROUS!
I CONDUCTED THE FINGER-TYPING MYSELF, AND DISCERNED ONLY *ONE* SET OF PRINTS!
COULD SOMEONE PLEASE DRAW THE CURTAINS?
THE ENLARGING PROJECTOR WORKS BETTER IN THE HALF-LIGHT
NOW, IF I MAY DIVERT YOUR ATTENTION TO THE *BLACK BOARD*, YOU'LL SEE HOW MY CONTRAPTION MAKES LARGE THE THUMBPRINTS PEELED BACK FROM THE WEAPON WITH WAXY BUTCHER'S PAPER
THERE ARE SEVERAL POINTS OF INTERSECTION WHICH MIGHT MAKE THE PRINTS *APPEAR* IDENTICAL TO THE NAKED EYE
BUT WHEN LAID UPON ONE ANOTHER CLEARLY ILLUSTRATE THAT THE PRINTS ARE *NOT* SO IDENTICAL
BOTH *ARE* THUMBPRINTS FROM A RIGHT HAND
BUT NOT THE *SAME* RIGHT HAND
AND BY EXTENSION, NOT THE SAME *HANDLER*
THIS WEAPON WAS TOUCHED BY TWO DIFFERENT PERSONS
WHO THEN, ARCHARD?
A REMARKABLE *DOUBLE*?
SOMEONE VERY *NEARLY* ALIKE EXCEPT FOR A FEW OF YOUR MINISCULE AND, I MIGHT ADD, *ARGUABLE* "*POINTS OF INTERSECTION*"?
WHAT OF THE CLUTCH OF *HAIR*, MISTER ARCHARD?
MISTER FRIPPS WAS DISCOVERED GRASPING STRANDS FROM ReMAR'S OWN HEAD
DON'T ALL OF YOU SEE WHAT HE'S DOING?
THIS THEATRE OF ARCANE AND ASSUMPTIVE DETECTIVE WORK?
HE'S *PLAYING* TO THE PRESS HERE IN ORDER TO BOLSTER HIS ERODING PUBLIC IMAGE!
AND YOU HAVE *NOT*, MISTER CROMBIE?
ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH *MICROSCOPY*?
VAGUELY SO
TINY THINGS APPEAR LARGER THAN THEY REALLY ARE MISTER CROMBIE
LENSES AND SUCH
I KNOW *THAT*
MISS WYNDHAM
WILL YOU TELL EVERYONE WHAT YOU *SEE*?
THE STRAND ON THE LEFT WAS RECENTLY PLUCKED FROM ALVA ReMAR'S SCALP
THE HAIR ON THE RIGHT CAME BY WAY OF THE EVIDENCE LEFT IN CLIFTON FRIPPS' RIGOR STIFFENED HAND
THE STRANDS ARE CLEARLY *DIFFERENT*
DIFFERENT COLORS AND TEXTURES
MARKEDLY SO
SPLITTING HAIRS, INDEED
WELL SAID, MISS WYNDHAM
AND WHAT DOES THIS *PROVE*?
THAT DESPITE HIS CONFESSION UNDER DURESS, ALVA ReMAR IS *INNOCENT* OF THIS CRIME
AND DESERVES NO LESS THAN YOUR HUMBLE *APOLOGY*
PERHAPS YOU'D CARE TO DO IT IN PERSON?

UNLIKE LESS FORTUNATE EDIFICES WITHIN THIS CITY, THE PARTINGTON OPERA HOUSE WAS SPARED THE RAVAGES OF MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE'S ATTACK.

WERE IT NOT SO LUCKY, SIMON AND I WOULD MOST ASSUREDLY BE TURNED AWAY AT THE BOX OFFICE OR WHAT WOULD BE LEFT OF IT

INSTEAD, WE ARE GUESTS OF HONOR

RECIPIENTS OF SOLD-OUT TICKETS PROVIDED BY A GRATEFUL ALVA ReMAR

NEVER LET IT BE SAID THAT SIMON ARCHARD IS NO PATRON OF THE ARTS.

COMING, LADIES?

WE'RE DREADFULLY LATE, SIMON

FASHIONABLY, OPHELIA. AND NO MORE THAN THIS ENTIRE QUELIE OF THEATRE GOERS

IS THERE NO OPENING ACT?

OH, SIMON

PLEASE DON'T MAKE ME SYMPATHIZE WITH OPHELIA IN YOUR BAITING OF HER

THE EFFECT IS NOT WHAT YOU THINK

THERE IS NO "OPENING ACT" IN AN ALVA ReMAR PERFORMANCE, SIMON ARCHARD. HE ONLY SINGS SOLO!

NOW HURRY!

WE SHAN'T BE LATE!

STOP DAWDLING, EMMA!

YOU SEEM DISTRACTED, MISS BISHOP

THE REAPER'S LAMENT

An operetta performed by the Sensational Alva ReMar

Star of ...ds, 2 Voices, 1 Love

...ceeds to benefit the unfortunate victims of Haley Thursday

SOMETHING TROUBLES ME, SIMON.

SUCH AS?

SUCH AS THE FACT THAT THE *REAL* MURDERER IS CERTAINLY LEFT AT LARGE IF ALVA ReMAR ISN'T THE ACTUAL CULPRIT

AND THE *EVIDENCE*

SO CLOSELY RESEMBLING EXCEPT UPON CLOSER EXAMINATION

ARE YOU BUILDING TO A *QUESTION*?

I AM

COULD A REMARKABLE DOUBLE *TRULY* BE TO BLAME?

ALL OTHER HYPOTHESES EXHAUSTED, IT WOULD APPEAR TO BE THE MOST *LIKELY*

WE MAY ALL HAVE A VERY *NEARLY* IDENTICAL TWIN SOMEWHERE IN THIS WIDE WORLD, EMMA

CUT FROM VERY SIMILAR CLOTH

AND YOU SUBSCRIBE TO THIS *FANCIFUL* NOTION?

I LEAVE IT TO *HIM* TO SORT OUT

THESE SEATS ARE QUITE NICE IAIN

YES

THE BEST

MY TASK WAS *DISPROVING* ReMAR

NOT FINDING THE REAL KILLER

THE CURTAIN RISES

AND ALVA ReMAR CERTAINLY DOESN'T DISAPPOINT

IN FACT, IF I UNDERSTAND THE APPROPRIATE THEATRICAL PARLANCE, HE KILLS.

HE IS EVERYTHING THE CRITICS... THE SURVIVING ONES, THAT IS... PURPORT HIM TO BE

A SINGING SENSATION WITH A VOICE SPANNING THE AURAL GULF BETWEEN TENOR AND SOPRANO WITH A TWIRLING FLOURISH OF THE CLOAK HE WEARS TO HIDE HIS OBVIOUS PHYSICAL DEFORMITY.

HE IS INDEED A MAN OF TWO VOICES AS PROCLAIMED IN HIS BIOGRAPHY PRINTED IN THE THEATRE PROGRAMME

A SINGING NIGHTINGALE APPARENTLY CAGED BY HIS OWN MISSHAPEN BODY

DID YOU HEAR ME *COMPLAINING*, LADIES?

NOT OUT LOUD, AT LEAST

THOUGH YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON I KNOW WHOSE FROWNS ARE AUDIBLE TO THE NAKED *EAR*

WE
I

I DON'T HAVE THE WORDS

SAVE YOUR REMARKABLE VOICE FOR ITS TRUE CALLING, MISTER REMAR

HAD THE EVIDENCE REVEALED ANYTHING *BUT* YOUR CLEAR INNOCENCE...

...I WOULD HAVE BEEN DENIED THE PLEASURE OF HEARING YOU SING

IT WAS TRULY *MEMORABLE*

THANK YOU, MISTER ARCHARD

NOW, IF YOU WOULD ACCOMPANY YOUR MOST ARDENT ADMIRER, MISS OPHELIA PRESSMONK

WE'VE TAKEN THE LIBERTY OF ASSEMBLING A RECEPTION IN YOUR HONOR AT MY HUMBLE RESIDENCE

EMMA AND I WILL JOIN YOU SHORTLY

TWO'S COMPANY, AFTER ALL

A SWEET GESTURE, SIMON

BUT *MISDIRECTED*

HOW SO?

SURELY SOMEONE WITH YOUR *KEEN* PERCEPTION WOULD NOTICE THAT OPHELIA ONLY HAS EYES FOR YOU

MY VISUAL ACUITY IS SHARP ENOUGH TO NOTICE THAT YOUR PROGRAMME HAS SLIPPED YOUR GRASP--

--OF THE *OBVIOUS*

BE *PATIENT*, SIMON

ALVA WILL BE OUT DIRECTLY

ALLOW *ME*, MISS BISHOP.

WHY ALLOW SUCH A FINE EVENING TO DEVOLVE INTO A DUEL OF WITS AND WORDS

INDEED, MISTER ARCHARD A FINE EVENING TO BE SURE

I, FOR ONE, STILL CANNOT COMPLETELY COMPREHEND HOW ALVA REMAR COULD MASTER SUCH A VOCAL RANGE...SO LOW *AND* SO HIGH AT EQUAL TURNS.

DO YOU THINK HIS DEFORMITY THE *HUMP*, I MEAN--

--SOMEHOW *EXTENDED* HIS VOICE BOX IN SUCH A WAY?

WHY NOT?

BUT A LARGER VOICE BOX SHOULD MAKE FOR A BOOMING *BASSO PROFUNDO*, CORRECT?

OR PERHAPS HE WAS BORN WITH *TWO* VOICE BOXES --

--IF EVEN *THAT* WOULD MAKE IT AT ALL POSSIBLE TO EFFECT SUCH BACK TO BACK VOCAL STYLINGS

PERHAPS THE BURDEN OF HIS HUMP IS MADE LIGHTER BY THE GIFT OF TWIN VOICE BOXES

YES, OF COURSE

HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SO DEAF AND BLIND?

TWIN VOICE BOXES INDEED, EMMA--

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT!

SIMON WAIT!

I'M CONFUSED!

SO YOU *AGREE* WITH MY THEORY?!

YES.

BUT NOT NEARLY IN THE WAY I WAS THINKING

WHAT DID YOU SEE IN THE SNOW, SIMON?!

TWIN TRACKS, EMMA!

ALVA'S *AND* THE KILLER'S, IF I DEDUCE CORRECTLY!

WALK AWAY, ALVA

YOU CAN'T HAVE HER

NOT UNLESS YOU *SHARE*

BUT YOU WON'T

AND I WON'T LET HER COME *BETWEEN* US

SHE HELPED ME *US*

WHICH IS PRECISELY WHY YOU SHOULD DROP THE KNIFE AND GIVE YOURSELF UP.

I WOULD NEVER HURT HER

OF COURSE, *YOU* WOULDN'T

YOU'VE KEPT THIS SECRET A LONG TIME

WHY JEOPARDIZE IT NOW WITH MURDER... *AGAIN*

YOU COULD HAVE GOTTEN OFF SCOTT-FREE

SIMON, PLEASE EXPLAIN TO ME WHAT'S HAPPENING

WE'VE *OUTGROWN* EACH OTHER, MISTER ARCHARD.

WE DON'T WANT THE SAME THINGS ANYMORE

I CAN'T CARRY THE BURDEN FOR *BOTH* OF US.

YOU *NEED* ME.

YOU'RE *NOTHING* WITHOUT ME

SHUT UP.

JUST *SHUT UP*, ALDO!

DO YOU *SEE*, MISTER ARCHARD!

ON MY BACK. FROM THE MOMENT OF OUR BIRTH

CRYING WHISPERING *SHRIEKING* IN MY EAR!

ALVA, *NO!*

I DON'T WANT ANYONE TO SEE ME!

THEY'LL TELL ..THEY'LL TELL AND WE'LL BE *RUINED!*

I WAS RIGHT

HORRIBLY, TRAGICALLY AND MONSTROUSLY CORRECT

TWIN VOICE BOXES, INDEED

SIMON *HOW*

CONJOINED BROTHERS, EMMA

TWIN SIBLINGS WHO NEVER FULLY SEPARATED DURING GESTATION IN THEIR MOTHER'S WOMB

I SPIED TWO PAIRS OF FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW BEHIND THE OPERA HOUSE, ONE DRAGGED BEHIND IN THE OTHER'S TRACKS

HOW COULD SUCH A THING HAPPEN?

YES, *HOW?*

HOW COULD NATURE BE SO *CALLOUS* AND *CRUEL* TO LUMP THE WEIGHT OF MY BROTHER ON MY SHOULDERS, MISS BISHOP?

IT'S *COLD*, ALVA PULL BACK THE CLOAK!

SHUT UP, ALDO!

STAND AT A DISTANCE, EMMA

AND YOU, SIMON

WHY MURDER CLIFTON FRIPPS, *ALDO?*

HE WROTE THAT THE SOPRANO *MY* VOICE WAS CLEARLY THE *WEAKER!*

HE SAID THAT ALVA WOULD BE JUST AS FAMED IF HE SANG ONLY *TENOR!*

HE WANTED TO BREAK UP THE ACT!

AND I KILLED HIM FOR IT!

GIVE ME THE KNIFE, BROTHER!

ALVA, LISTEN TO ME

I'M MORE THAN WILLING TO BEAR WITNESS TO YOUR *UNWILLING* COMPLICITY IN THIS STRANGE AND TRAGIC AFFAIR

ANY JUDGE WOULD BE SYMPATHETIC TO YOUR *CONDITION*

YES

BUT HOW COULD I NOT BE JAILED FOREVER ALONGSIDE *ALDO?*

I'VE SERVED THAT SENTENCE FAR TOO LONG ALREADY!

BROTHER, NO--

-ACKK!

ALVA, *STOP* THIS MADNESS!

YOU CAN'T CUT ME OUT OF YOUR LIFE, ALVA!

NO

I SUPPOSE I CAN'T

EMMA, FETCH THE POLICE!

AND A DOCTOR!

BE CAREFUL, SIMON!

STOP *THRASHING*, BOTH OF YOU!

YOU'LL BLEED TO DEATH UNLESS I BIND YOUR WOUND

LET ME DIE

NO, ALVA

I WON'T LET YOU

I WON'T LET YOU LEAVE ME *ALONE!*

BOK

UNH!

I WON'T LET YOU BREAK UP THE ACT!

AND THE CURTAIN FELL

THE PENNY ARCADIAN WAS KIND

BUT THE CORONET AND HERALD AND OTHER MORE SALACIOUS PUBLICATIONS, WITH THEIR LURID RECOUNTS OF THE OPERA SENSATION, WERE LESS SO

"THE FREAK"

"THE MURDERER"

"THE ONE PARTINGTON'S FORMERLY FAVORITE SON LET SLIP HIS GRASP."

HOW'S YOUR HEAD?

BASHED

BUT I'LL LIVE

STILL PICKETING DOWN THERE?

WE'RE UNDER SEIGE, EMMA

I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE SOME BREAKFAST

SOME TEA AND SYMPATHY, PERHAPS?

WHAT'S *IRONIC* IS THAT OPHELIA HAD NO IDEA THAT ALVA HAD FEELINGS FOR HER.

BLISSFULLY UNAWARE, REALLY

SHE BELIEVED ReMAR WAS SIMPLY *GRATEFUL* FOR ENLISTING YOUR HELP AND HOPED SHE MIGHT *AUDITION* FOR H.M

FORGET THEM, SIMON

THEY'LL TIRE OF HARANGUING YOU AND GO AWAY

YOU FREED AN INNOCENT MAN AND FOUND THE *TRUE* KILLER

AS FAR AS THE LAW IS CONCERNED, JUSTICE WAS SERVED

THE SCALES ARE *BALANCED*

ARE THEY?

A CONVERSATION TAKES *TWO*, ALVA

SUIT YOURSELF

WHEN YOU'RE THROUGH *SIGHING* SULKING OVER THAT LITTLE THING *FROM* WITH THE COPPERY WHISKERS

YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME

The Penny Abbadon

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every mystery unveiled in his absence, and within hours Archard had recovered the Merriwell jewelry and brought to justice the

The **PENNY ARCADIAN**

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FREAK TWINS LINKED TO MURDER!

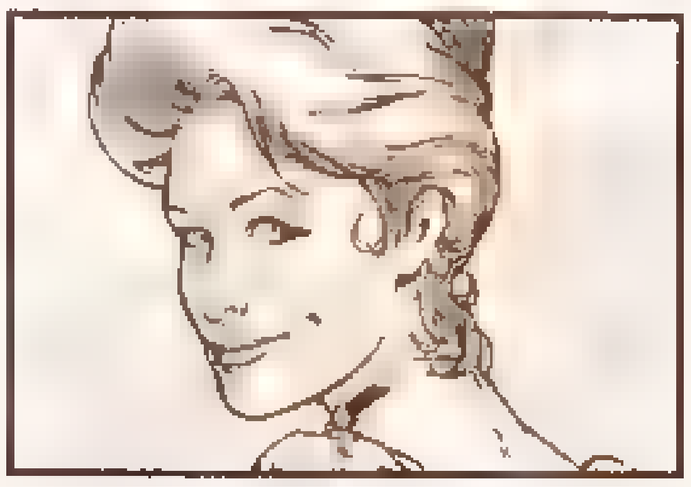
OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

PARTINGTON'S FAVORITE SON?
IS HIS MIND STILL RAZOR-SHARP?

EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY,
HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE



IAIN CROMBIE

A COMPETING CRIMINALIST
HIS INTENTIONS INSCRUTABLE!

The murder of theatrical critic Clifton Fripps in a snowy alley adjacent to the Partington Opera House stunned the citizenry of our fair city, especially so since Fripps' apparent slayer was none other than the celebrated singing sensation Alva ReMar

ReMar — known far and wide for an expansive vocal range which crossed the gamut from tenor to soprano, as well as a pronounced deformity concealed by an omnipresent cloak — initially confessed complicity to the killing and turned himself over to local constabulary

Earlier accounts of this episode detailed how detective Iain Crombie assembled circumstantial evidence left at the scene of the crime which (at the time *The Penny Arcadian* went to press) seemed to prove ReMar's guilt beyond all doubt.

However, ReMar later recanted his claim and asserted innocence in the stabbing death of Fripps, who had frequently taken the singer's considerable talents to task in his weekly column published by our esteemed competitor, *The Clarion*

As previously reported in these very pages, detective Simon Archard — returned to Partington after his marooning on the distant island of Irandoa — set about to exculpate ReMar after apparently being moved to action by the singer's assertions of blamelessness

According to Police Commissioner Theopolous Morton, Archard's investigation did indeed disprove ReMar's immediate involvement in the crime through careful examination of fingerprints upon the murder weapon and telltale hair strands identified by Mr. Crombie

Satisfied that ReMar was indeed not Fripps' murderer, Morton ordered the operatic sensation's release from custody

Little did Morton know that he was also liberating the true killer.

Following ReMar's return to the stage last evening for a special performance benefiting the unfortunates

ARTIST'S GRAPHIC CONCEPTION OF THE REMAR BROTHERS' PECULIAR PHYSICAL ABNORMALITY

left destitute after "Holey Thursday," Commissioner Morton reports that Archard deduced that the cloaked ReMar was not one, but *two* people, conjoined twin brothers linked by a fused spinal column and (presumably) intertwining internal organs. With a spin of his cloak, the tenor Alva allowed the soprano Aldo his time in the limelight.

As Morton reports, it was a vengeful dagger-wielding Aldo ReMar who killed Clifton Fripps and attempted to do the same to Archard before fleeing into the night.

Archard declined commentary on this strange turn of events, including adding speculation as to whether or not Alva ReMar aided his brother's escape, or if these twins were capable of ambulating independently of one another.

Presently, Commissioner Morton reports that constables remain alerted to the flight of the ReMar brothers and have posted billets seeking information to their capture

For his part, Iain Crombie has voiced considerable criticism of Archard for loosing the very rogue that his own admittedly short-sighted sleuthing would have otherwise revealed had the police completed a more thorough search of (Alva) ReMar…**PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE**

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

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THE WARM WINDS OF SPRING HAVE BREATHED NEW LIFE INTO PARTINGTON.

SIMON DECLINED MY INVITATION TO TAKE A TURN AROUND OUR FAIR CITY ON THIS VERY SPLENDID DAY

AND SO I FIND MYSELF ACCOMPANIED BY YOUNG CECIL AND THE MONKEY ON HIS BACK

HOO!

WOULD YOU LIKE A NICE *CHAPEAU* TO MATCH YOUR NEW SCARF, CECIL?

NO *T'ANKS*, M.SS EMMA

AND DIS STICKY-FINGERED JENNIFER DON'T NEEDS ONE *NEITHER*

HE'S RIGHT, THOUGH...

HER MONKEY'S PAW DOES TEND TO LAPSE INTO PURLOINING, NO THANKS TO HER PREVIOUS OWNER

OOK?

STILL, IT'S REFRESHING TO ENCOUNTER ONE MYSTERY SO CLEARLY DECIPHERABLE

ALL FACETS REFLECTING THE SAME INCONTROVERTIBLE CONCLUSION

YOU LIKE, *YES*?

IT'S QUITE BEAUTIFUL

IS HAND BLOWN, NO BUBBLES, NO IMPURITIES.

I SELL TO YOU FOR HALF, A *STEAL* FOR YOU

THANK YOU, BUT NO—

--I'VE PURCHASED FAR TOO MUCH TODAY

...AND I'VE NO NEED FOR FANCY TRIFLES TO MESMERIZE ME WITH MY OWN REFLECTION

HEE!

DAT'S FOR SURE!

AS ITS OWN SHINY VENEER OF ICE AND SNOW MELT AWAY, PARTINGTON'S RECENT POCKED AND PITTED IMPURITIES ARE REVEALED ONCE MORE

THUS, REBUILDING COMMENCES ANEW

MIND YOUR PATH, CECIL--

GREEP!

THERE ARE DANGERS ON ALL SIDES

OR UNDER THE SURFACES

BENEATH THE FACETS OF OUR DAILY EXISTENCE

LIKE THE ANGLES AND PLANES OF A MYSTERIOUS GEMSTONE

OR ANY OTHER ENIGMATIC PRISM

THE VERY TALISMAN THAT PERMITTED A DEMONESS TO ESCAPE FROM HER HELL

YOU STUPID COW! GET OUT OF MY WAY!

THE SAME LENS WHICH FOCUSED MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE'S OBSESSION INTO MADDENED VENDETTA.

OR IS IT JUST SO MUCH COSTUME JEWELRY?

A PASTE BAUBLE FOR SOME GRAND SPECTACLE?

EY, MONKEY BOY!

YOU STILL HANG N' 'ROUND WITH THAT *GADABOUT* SIMON ARCHARD?

LOST HIS *TOUCH*, THEY SAYS. WHAT WITH GETTIN' THEM FREAK BROTHERS MURDERIN' AND MUTILATIN' AND MESSIN' ABOUT

YESTERDAY'S NEWS, THEY SAY

DEM'S FIGHTIN' WOIDS!

NO THEY'RE NOT

EXTRA! EXTRA!

CROMBIE PINCHES PILFERER!

READ ALL ABOUT PARTINGTON'S *NEW* MASTER DETECTIVE!

I REALLY *HATE* DAT K'D

DON'T SAY THAT, CECIL

BUT DAT K'D'S MY NUMBER ONE *ADDIVERSARY*

WE COULD ALL DO WITH A FEW LESS *ADVERSARIES*, YOUNG MAN

HERE WE ARE THEN, HOME AGAIN

YEESH, WOULD YA LOOK AT DA TIME

LET ME JUST FETCH YOU SOME COINS FOR YOUR EFFORTS, CECIL.

Uh. NO TROUBLE 'T'ALL, MISS EMMA

I COULDN'T TAKE MONEY FROM YOUSE

NONSENSE

JUST LET ME

I GOTTA GO!

C'MON, JENNY!

HOO?

AND YOU ARE A MYSTERY UNTO YOURSELF, YOUNG CECIL THE MONKEY BOY

WHERE DO YOU AND YOUR FURRED FRIEND SLEEP AT NIGHT?

MISS!

I SAY, M.SS-

-MAYHAP HAVE YOU SPIED A FRECKLED AND ILL-MANNERED *RAGAMUFFIN* IN A BOWLER HAT PASS BY?

I

I CAN'T SAY THAT I *DID*

AS YOU CAN SEE, I'VE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO BALANCE MY MANY PARCELS *AND* UNLATCH THE DOOR

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU COULD--

NO TIME FOR THAT

I *KNOW* THAT TROUBLESOME BOY SURELY CAME THIS WAY!

STEPPED INTO A BIT OF TROUBLE, CECIL?

HELLO?

OR HAVE I?

WHAT'S THIS ON THE MAT

NO

NOT MY NEW SHOES

YOU

CHESTER

BURF

YOU CAN STOP WAGGING THAT PITIFUL STUB OF A TAIL AS IF YOU'RE RIGHT *PROUD* OF YOURSELF

SEKOWSKY!

I *INSIST* YOU COME OUT AND RUB CHESTER'S PUDGY LITTLE NOSE IN THE MESS HE'S MADE OF MY NEW SHOES!

LOOK AT THEM *RUINED!*

SOILED UTTERLY!

MISTER SEKOWSKY, SHOW YOURSELF!

YOU'RE WASTING YOUR BREATH, EMMA.

THE LITTLE CHAP SHOWED UP PAWING AT THE DOOR WHILE YOU AND THE LAD WERE WALKABOUT

SANS SEKOWSKY, I MIGHT ADD AND QUITE *HUNGRY*

BY THE LOOKS OF HIM, I'D WAGER THAT'S THE FIRST MILK CHESTER HAS ENJOYED IN QUITE SOME TIME

WITH THE DOLLOP OF RUM I ADDED, IT'S MORE A *HOT TODDY*

PERHAPS YOU COULD TELL US WHERE MISTER SEKOWSKY IS LOCATED AT PRESENT.

CHESTER DEAR

ARE YOU VERSED IN CANINE LANGUAGES ALSO, *MISS BISHOP*

BURF

CHESTER LIKES PEANUTS BEST, *MISS PRESSMONK*

I'LL REMEMBER THAT

IS SIMON ABOUT?

HE'S SOAKING RIGHT NOW

AND I MUST SAY THAT A LEISURELY BATH WOULDN'T HURT YOU *EITHER*, EMMA DEAR

YES.

BUT *BUSINESS BEFORE PLEASURE*

AND NEVER IN TANDEM

ALTHOUGH THE RESIDENCE DOES REMAIN A HOME AND PLACE OF COMMERCE FOR LADYBIRD NELL AND HER GIRLS.

IT IS NOT UNCOMMON TO CROSS PATHS WITH THEIR CLIENTELE ON ONE OF THE GRAND STAIRWELLS

GOOD DAY TO YOU, ALDERMAN MASTERS!

A SHAMEFACED AND BASHFUL LOT, TO BE SURE

YES uh AND YOU um YES

NELL'S GIRLS HAVE THAT EFFECT ON MOST MEN

SIMON HAS PROVIDED THEM WITH A SAFE PLACE TO CONDUCT THEIR TIME-HONORED PROFESSION

FOR REASONS I HAVE YET TO UNCOVER

SURELY, IT CANNOT BE FROM THE MERE KINDNESS OF HIS HEART

WHICH MAY YET RESEMBLE THIS DENTED AND DINGED IRON CHAMBER IF SIMON CONTINUES TO PUNISH HIMSELF FOR HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE STRANGE CASE OF ALVA AND ALDO REMAR

BLONG

HE CALLS IT HIS "THINK-TANK"

OR SENSORY-DEPRIVATION SPHERE

BLOTCH

KERKLANK

IT'S WHERE HE GOES TO MEDITATE

OR ACCESS SOME HIGHER BRAIN COGNITION BY SHUTTING HIMSELF AWAY FROM ALL OTHER SENSORY INPUT IN HIS SUBMERSION KNICKERS

AND COWL

I SHAN'T FORGET THE COWL

IT'S PERHAPS MEAN SPIRITED TO STAND STOCK-STILL AND SILENT WHILE HE NAVIGATES HIS WAY OUT OF THE TANK BY TOUCH ALONE

=SNIFF=

=SNIFF=

...VISUALLY BEREFT THOUGH HE IS WITH THOSE OPAQUE GOGGLES

I RESPECT YOUR PRIVACY

YOU COULD AT LEAST EXTEND ME THE SAME COURTESY~

~EMMA

A BLIND GUESS, SIMON?

DEPRIVING THE FIVE SENSES OF STIMULI FOR A TIME OFTEN SERVES TO MAKE THEM ALL THE MORE *ACUTE*

YOU'VE ADDED AN ADDITIONAL SCENT TO YOUR *PERFUMERY*

NOT PRECISELY

BUT PERHAPS IT IS TIME I CONFIRMED MY PRESENCE

BY OFFERING YOU A CLOSER WHIFF

BLONG

I SEE THAT YOU'VE DEVELOPED A *SIXTH* SENSE AS WELL, SIMON

IS *THAT* THE VALUE IN HAULING THIS BATTERED RECEPTACLE UP FROM THE TRASH HEAP?

CERTAINLY, THERE MUST BE SOME LOFTIER PURPOSE TO YOUR AGAIN PERCHING A GIANT WEIGHT SO PRECARIOUSLY ABOVE OR HEADS IN THIS GREAT BELFRY

THE THINK TANK HAS PROVEN ITS *WORTH*

LIKE YOU, IT SURVIVED A TERRIBLE FALL AND AIDED US IN PREVENTING MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE FROM POSSESSING THE ENIGMATIC PRISM.

STRANGE THAT YOU SHOULD MENTION THAT

THE ENIGMATIC PRISM, *SPECIFICALLY*

I THINK IT'S HIGH TIME WE TALKED ABOUT THIS *LINGERING* ENIGMA

I'M NOT DRESSED FOR SUCH A DISCUSSION

I WON'T TAKE *NO* FOR AN ANSWER

NOR WILL I LOSE INTEREST IN THE TIME IT TAKES FOR YOU TO CHANGE INTO SOMETHING MORE COMFORTABLE THAN YOUR TIGHTLY SEWN KNICKERS AND COWL

FITS YOU LIKE A *GLOVE*, MASTER CROMBIE SIR!

AS IT SUITS YOU
Fred Roberts
Master Tailor and Proprietor

YES

YES, *INDEED*, ROBERTS OLD MAN!

WHAT SAY *YOU*, CHARITY?

YOU'RE CERTAINLY LOOKING AS *DISTINGUISHED* AS SIMON ARCHARD, IAIN

AND MUCH THE SAME SIZE AS MASTER ARCHARD

THOUGH HIS INSEAM IS JUST A TRIFLE *LONGER*

TRUTH BE KNOWN, HE'S ONE OF MY *BEST* CUSTOMERS

THIS PARTICULAR MATERIAL IS AMONG HIS PREFERRED TROUSER LINENS ALSO.

SMALL WORLD, ROBERTS.

JUST ALTER THE TROUSERS AND HAVE THEM SENT TO MY FLAT WITH THE REST

SIR

WHAT *NOW*, ROBERTS?

THE LADY?

CHARITY!

CAN A MAN NOT DRESS HIMSELF IN PRIVATE!

APPARENTLY NOT

WHATEVER DO YOU MEAN?

YOU'VE NEGLECTED YOUR *TIE*

HERE, LET ME

CHARITY, I DIDN'T I MEAN ..IT'S JUST THAT WE MUST KEEP UP *APPEARANCES*

IT WOULDN'T DO TO HAVE ANYONE BELIEVE THAT OUR RELATIONSHIP IS ANYTHING MORE THAN *BUSINESS*

YOU DO THAT QUITE WELL, YOU KNOW

I KNOTTED MY FATHER'S TIES AS A GIRL

PENNY ARCADIAN

CROMBIE PINCHES PILFERER

NEW TEAM'S FAME GROWS WHILE CITY'S FAVORITE SON WANES

READ ALL ABOUT THE NEW YOUNG DETECTIVE!

JUST A PENNY PER PAPER IS ALL!

YOUR FAME GROWS BY THE DAY, IAIN

Hmph

YOU SHOULD BE *HAPPY*

YOU'VE MADE QUITE A NAME FOR YOURSELF IN SO SHORT A TIME

BUT FOR HOW LONG?

HOW LONG UNTIL I'M A BYGONE HEADLINE AND DWELLING ONCE MORE IN THE SPECTRE OF SIMON ARCHARD'S CELEBRITY?

OH, *PLEASE*, IAIN

DON'T FEED THOSE AWFUL THINGS

YOU'RE JUST ENCOURAGING THEM TO BE VAGABOND *BEGGARS*

JUST SCRAPS FROM MY OWN TABLE, CHARITY

AND THEY'RE NOT AWFUL AT ALL

PEOPLE ARE FICKLE

BUT AT LEAST YOU KNOW WHERE YOU STAND WITH LESS *DISCRIMINATING* CREATURES, BEGGARS OR NO

SIR, WE'RE NEARLY TWENTY MINUTES TARDY FOR YOUR THREE O'CLOCK MEETING WITH THE MAYOR

IF ONLY WE HAD TRAVELED BY WAY OF YOUR *CARRIAGE*

BALDERDASH, QUINCY!

WE WOULD HAVE SQUANDERED THE OPPORTUNITY TO SURVEY WHAT PARTINGTON *WAS* BEFORE WE PRAGGED HER INTO A MORE TECHNOLOGICALLY-ENLIGHTENED AGE

YOU'RE *LATE*, MISTER MAGNUSON

AND YOU'RE A CLOCK-WATCHING *DANDY*, STRATHMORE.

MY APPOINTMENT IS FOR AN HOUR OF MAYOR BULLROND'S TIME

AND IF YOU'LL EXTEND ME A FEW MORE MINUTES OF MY ALLOTTED AUDIENCE, MY BOYS WILL ASSEMBLE THE PRESENTATION MATERIALS

WHAT *SORT* OF PRESENTATION, MERRIWETHER?

YOU KNOW THAT I HAVE LITTLE TIME TO SIT IDLY AND DEBATE BUSINESS PROPOSALS WHILE PARTINGTON SUFFERS--

NOW LET'S NOT LET THE HORSE TROT AHEAD OF THE CART, CHARLESTON

YOU'LL MIND WHAT WILL SURELY SOON BECOME AN *ARCHAIC* EXPRESSION, IF I CAN BE SO BOLD

YOUR BOLDNESS IN ALL THINGS IS *LEGENDARY*, MERRY

AND JUST WHAT ARE YOUR *LACKEYS* DOING TO MY DESK?

SIMPLY ALLOWING YOU CLOSER EXAMINATION OF THE BUILDING PLANS, MISTER MAYOR

I'VE NO TIME TO LOOK AT BUILDINGS THAT MIGHT WELL TUMBLE INTO THE CAVITIES ERODED RIGHT UNDER THIS ONCE-FAIR CITY!

THAT'S BECAUSE YOU CAN ONLY SEE THE GLASS AS *HALF-EMPTIED*, CHAS OLD CHUM

I SEE IT AS *HALF-FULL*

BEHOLD THE BULLET!

PARTINGTON'S NEW-FANGLED SUBTERRANEAN TROLLEY SERVICE!

THESE SIMPLE ILLUSTRATIONS ARE MERE *MOCK-UPS* FOR THE *ARCADIAN*

JUST TO WHET THE APPETITES OF OUR FELLOW PARTINGTONIAN TAXPAYERS AND POTENTIAL INVESTORS

MY ENGINEERS ARE STILL REFINING THE FINAL DESIGNS--

--BUT YOU'RE LOOKING AT A PROTOTYPE STEAM PROPELLED POPULATION DELIVERY VEHICLE!

PLEASE, CONTINUE

GENTLEMEN, I GIVE YOU THE FUTURE OF PARTINGTON!

MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE DIDN'T JUST LEAVE THIS CITY FULL OF CRATERS AND VOIDS

WHAT HE DID WAS TO EXCAVATE THE SOFT UNDERBELLY OF OUR CIVIC COMPLACENCY AND MAKE AMPLE ROOM FOR *PROGRESS!*

YOU'RE *INSANE*, MAGNUSON

INSANE WITH *INSPIRATION*, STRATHMORE!

MAYOR BULLROND--

--FELLOW SELECTMEN

YOU'RE ALL FOOLS IF YOU BELIEVE THIS BLOWHARD BARON CAN SPIN SIMON ARCHARD'S FOLLY INTO SOME GOLDEN BOON TO PARTINGTON

THESE *ARE* JUST HOLES, GENTLEMEN

FILL THEM UP WITH DIRT OR ASHES AND BE DONE WITH THEM!

COME AGAIN, GUV?

'S'ARD TO *'EAR* YA WITH ALL THAT SOOT AN' ASHES MUCKIN' UP TH' PIPE

YOU WERE SAYIN' 'OW OLD MERRY MAGNUSON CALLED YOU A *DANDY* AND WOT?

SKRIP SKRIPSKRIP

CAN YOU BELIEVE THE NER

--MUST YOU HAVE THE CHIMNEY SWEPT *NOW*, TAMMY?!

STUCK FLUES CAUSE FIRES, RUFUS

AND IT'S HOT ENOUGH IN HERE *ALREADY*

YES -

--YES, IT CERTAINLY *IS*, TAMMY

RUFUS?

Mmm?

TELL ME AGAIN ABOUT THAT *"SUB-WAY"* WIDGET

THATAGIRL, TAMMY LOOV

KEEP TH' FRIENDS CLOSE AND TH' ENEMIES CLOSER, 'EY?

OOH?

THERE YA BE, JENNIFER

JUST MISTER ARCHARD'S EYES AND ALL THAT ROT

HEE!

HOO!

NOW, YOU KNOWS HOW IT GOES, MONKEY--

YA GETS DA BISCUIT *AFTER* I GETS DA PACKAGE

AND DON'T GO THROWIN' NUFFIN' *NASTY* AT ME

STRAIGHTAWAY TO DA BOSS AND FER HIM TO READ *ONLY*, LOOSH

UNDERSSSTOOD, LAD

PETER GRIMESSS.

LUCIUS.

FOR SSSIMON, ALONE

GOT IT

MIZ OPHELIA

MIZ MICHELLE

POST FOR SIMON

I'LL TAKE *THAT*

PUGILIST PETE, HAVE YOU BEEN *AVOIDING* ME?

I um JUST BEEN *BUSY* IS ALL

WOULD YOU JUS' BE A DEAR AND HAVE THE OTHER LOVELY LADS DELIVER *THESE*

I'D BE *GRATEFUL* AS USUAL

YEAH um *SURELY*, MIZ MICHELLE

MY MY MY AN UNDERGROUND RAILWAY

WHAT A *NOVEL* IDEA

NELL, I'VE A MISSIVE FOR SIMON

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

HOW SHOULD *I* KNOW?

I, FOR ONE, RESPECT THE *SANCTITY* OF SECRET MESSAGES

A NOTE FOR YOU, SIMON

TAMMY MUST HAVE LEARNED SOMETHING IMPORTANT FROM YOUR ADVOCATE IN *THE PENNY ARCADIAN*

I ASSURE YOU, NELL

C. RUFUS STRATHMORE IS NO SUPPORTER OF THE WORK I DO

JS IT IMPORTANT NEWS?

INDEED

IT'S POSITIVELY *GROUNDBREAKING*, NELL.

SIMON'S LIBRARY WAS ONCE FAIRLY COMPREHENSIVE

WHAT REMAINS IS AN ABRIDGED VERSION OF THAT FORMER REPOSITORY

A GREAT PORTION OF THE ARCHIVES TUMBLED INTO THE SEWERS BENEATH THE RESIDENCE DURING LIGHTBOURNE'S UNDERMINING

SOME OF THESE BOOKS WOUND THEIR WAY BACK TO THE SURFACE COURTESY OF SCAVENGERS EAGER TO TURN A QUICK POUND

SIMON HAS SLOWLY BEEN RECOUPING THIS MUSTY AND MILDEWED WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE

THAT IS CURIOUSLY BEREFT OF ANY MENTION OF THE PRISM

AND I AM THE ONLY ONE TO HAUNT THESE DARKENED STACKS IN SEARCH OF ENIGMATIC ENLIGHTENMENT

creakkk

IS THERE SOMEONE SKULKING ABOUT?

NO, EMMA

ONLY IN YOUR IMAGINATION

THE SEARCH FOR THE TINIEST ENDNOTE OR ERRATA CONCERNING THIS CURSED CURIO HAS RENDERED YOU PARANOID

DELUSIONAL

SIMON, YOU'VE KEPT ME WAITING LONG--

ENOUGH

SEEING THINGS

MISS BISHOP

EMMA, DEAR!

I'M VERY SORRY TO uh INTERRUPT

YOU'RE NOT INTERRUPTING ANYTHING, DEAR

I WAS JUST DELIVERING A MESSAGE TO SIMON

EXACTLY

A MESSAGE

WHAT SORT OF MESSAGE?

YOU'LL PARDON IF I'M INTRUDING, BUT YOU BOTH SEEMED QUITE PENSIVE JUST NOW

MERELY MULLING ABOUT SURVEILLANCE OF POTENTIAL PLOTS AGAINST ME

NOTHING TO WORRY OVER

THEN YOU WON'T MIND IF I TURN THE TOPIC OF CONVERSATION BACK TO OUR EARLIER DISCUSSION OF THE ENIGMATIC PRISM

WHAT OF IT?

CONSIDERING THAT OUR LIVES WERE VERY NEARLY ENDED IN THE PURSUIT OF IT--

--I BELIEVE THAT I SHOULD KNOW EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS JEOPARDOUS JEWEL

I'M AFRAID THAT I KNOW AS LITTLE OF IT AS YOU, EMMA

THEN ASSURE ME THAT THE PRISM IS SAFE

IT'S SAFE

ASSURE ME

IT'S SAFE

NO JEST INTENDED

YOU'RE ONLY THE SECOND PERSON TO BE PRIVY TO THIS CLANDESTINE VAULT

AND BEFORE YOU SPECULATE, NELL IS NOT THE FIRST

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT I CHANGE THE COMBINATION PERIODICALLY

I'D EXPECT NO LESS FROM YOU, SIMON ARCHARD

YOU'RE WELCOME TO EXAMINE THE PRISM TO CONFIRM ITS AUTHENTICITY

FEEL ANY DIFFERENT?

HAVING DESPICABLE THOUGHTS?

DON'T MAKE SPORT OF MY CONCERNS, SIMON

NOW THAT LIFE HAS RETURNED TO A MODICUM OF NORMALITY, WE SHOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO LEARN THE PRISM'S SECRETS BEFORE ONE OR BOTH OF US END UP LIKE MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE

DISCREDITED

DERANGED

AND DANGEROUS

YOU CAN REST EASY, EMMA

I'M ALREADY WORKING ON THE FIRST ONE

" BUT BY INVITATION ONLY"

GOOD GRAVY!

A SHINDIG AT S.MON'S!

AND WILL *REFRESHMENTS* BE SERVED?

DAT'S FER SURE, MISTER DeWINTER!

HAH!

DID YOU MANAGE TO BREAK AWAY FROM THE OFFICE TODAY, CHARLES?

AS A MATTER OF FACT

RUFUSSS SSSSTRATHMORE?

Y-Y-YES?

TWISSS ISSS FOR *YOU*

RUFUS!

WHO'S CALLING AT SO LATE?

AND WHAT'S *THAT* YOU'VE GOT?

A SUMMONS TO A SOCIAL FUNCTION.

=HMPH=

AT THE RESIDENCE OF PARTINGTON'S "FAVORITE SON"

SO THEN, WILL YOU BE ESCORTING *ME*~

~OR THAT ADULTEROUS *TROLLOP* YOU VISIT TWICE WEEKLY?

EVELINE, I !

I'M GLAD I WENT SHOPPING TODAY

Emma Bishop

SIMON'S SOIREE COULD BE THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS MENDING HIS PUBLIC IMAGE

OR HAVE YOU ANOTHER PURPOSE IN MIND, MISTER ARCHARD?

BETTER TO REFLECT ON WHATEVER YOUR PARTNER'S SLANT MAY BE BY THE LIGHT OF DAY, EMMA

AFTER YOU'RE PROPERLY RESTED FOR THE EXCITEMENT AHEAD

THUMP

SIMON?

NELL?

OPHELIA, IF YOU'RE PLAYING A PRANK AT MY EXPENSE YOU TREAD ON *TENUOUS* GROUND.

I SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED

THE RESIDENCE IS NOW A FULL HOUSE

I SHOULDN'T BE STARTLED WHEN SOMETHING GOES BUMP IN THE NIGHT

SIMON DOESN'T LOSE SLEEP OVER SUCH SMALL ANXIETIES.

ASIDE FROM HIS PRESENT WOES.

NO

HIS MIND IS UNDOUBTEDLY UNTROUBLED BY PETTY TRIFLES.

I WON'T

SUCH ARE THE RESTORATIVE POWERS OF A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

PARTINGTON'S MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE ARRIVE IN THEIR FORMAL FINERY

AND YOU DON'T LOOK SO UNAPPEALING YOURSELF, EMMA

NOT EVERY GUEST IS A FRIEND OF SIMON

LORD AND LADY QUIGLEY

IS SHE HERE ALSO, RUFUS?

MAGNUSON'S SUBTERRANEAN TROLLEY IS A BOONDOGGLE, MISTER MAYOR

I THINK YOU'RE QUITE WRONG, STRATHMORE

S MY TIE STRAIGHT?

YOU OOR DASHING IAIN STOP YOUR FRETTING

SOME VERY DEFINITELY FALL UNDER THE CATEGORY OF COMPETITORS.

HUNGRY, DEW NTER?

ARCHARD RARELY ENTERTAINS THEOPOLOUS

AND THESE ARE VERY FINE SANDWICHES!

OTHERS MIGHT EVEN BE CALLED ADDIVERSARIES IN YOUNG CECIL'S PARLANCE.

STRATHMORE, MIGHT I HAVE A WORD?

OF COURSE ARCHARD

IT IS YOUR HOUSE AFTER ALL

LIKE OUR MONKEY BOY, YOU COULD DO WITH A FEW LESS OF THOSE ALSO, SIMON

MIND WHERE THIS EVENING TAKES YOU

AND TAKE CARE NOT TO STEP INTO BIGGER TROUBLES

NO

NOT AGAIN

NOT MY BEAUTIFUL SHOE

CHESTER

BURF

YOU ALRIGHT, MIZ EMMA?

NO, I AM NOT!

THERE SHE GOES AGAIN ON A TEAR

NEEDS A MAN TO SORT HER OUT, SHE DOES

I HOPE YOU WON'T MIND IF WE CONVERSE IN PRIVATE, STRATHMORE.

BRANDY?

I'VE JUST OPENED A BOTTLE

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT, ARCHARD?

WHAT'S YOUR GAME?

I'M PROPOSING A *TRUCE*, STRATHMORE

AN END TO HOSTILITIES

WHATEVER DO YOU MEAN?

I HAVE DEVOTED NEARLY MY ENTIRE ADULT LIFE TO THE WELL-BEING OF PARTINGTON AND THE PROSECUTION OF JUSTICE HEREIN

AND YOU'VE EVIDENTLY DONE *WELL* FOR YOURSELF WHILE ALLOWING YOUR FOES TO STRIKE AT PARTINGTON'S UNWITTING CITIZENS.

STRANGE THAT YOU ALLOWED YOUR OWN MAD MENTOR TO VERY NEARLY COLLAPSE THE CITY WHICH CALLS YOU IT'S *"FAVORITE SON"*

MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE'S HATRED EXTENDED TO ALL OF PARTINGTON

NOT JUST ME

I DID NOTHING TO PRECIPITATE HIS TERRORISTIC ATTACK

..AND I MUST PROTEST YOUR EDITORIALISATIONS CLAIMING *OTHERWISE*

WE'RE FORTUNATE THAT THE *ARCADIAN* IS A *FREE* PRESS ARCHARD

I VOICE THE CONCERNS OF *MANY*

I WON'T HAVE ANY MORE OF IT, STRATHMORE

AND YOU'LL DO WHAT?

HAVE DeWINTER *CENSOR* MY LETTERS?

PERHAPS I'LL WRITE A REBUTTAL CALLING YOUR CHARACTER TO QUESTION AND REVEALING YOUR EXTRAMARITAL LIAISONS

YOU WOULDN'T STOOP TO BLACKMAIL JUST AS YOU WOULDN'T BE SO RASH TO RUN ME THROUGH WITH THAT POKER

FACE THE TRUTH, ARCHARD

--NO ONE WANTS YOU HERE

SELECTMAN STRATHMORE

GET OUT OF MY HOUSE BEFORE EITHER OF US *REGRETS* THIS NIGHT

PITY

YOUR BRANDY IS QUITE SPLEN-

SPLUH!

STRATHMORE?

ERK!

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?

SKRINK

IS THIS YOUR IDEA OF A *JOKE*, STRATHMORE?

A SCHEME TO HUMILIATE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MY GUESTS?

SPLUR

GONE

NO RESPIRATION AT ALL

AND YOUR LIMBS ARE ALREADY STIFFENING WITH RIGOR

=hic=

BURF

=hic=

YOU NEEDN'T BOTHER SIMON IN HIS STUDY, MISS BISHOP

I ONLY WANTED TO SOLICIT HIS AND COMMISSIONER MORTON'S ADVICE ON A CIVIC ISSUE OF SOME IMPORT

A SUB-*WHAT* AGAIN, CHARLES?

NOK NOK

IT'S NOT A BOTHER MAYOR BULLROND

YOUR HOST SHOULD ATTEND TO HIS GUESTS, ESPECIALLY THE VERY IMPORTANT ONES

I CAN'T IMAGINE WHY THIS DOOR IS LATCHED

SIMON YOU'RE BEING *UNSOCIABLE!*

NOK NOK NOK

COMMISSIONER, I RECOMMEND CALLING YOUR CONSTABLES

HAS THERE BEEN SOME CRIMINAL CHICANERY, SIMON?

WHAT'S HAPPENED, SIMON?

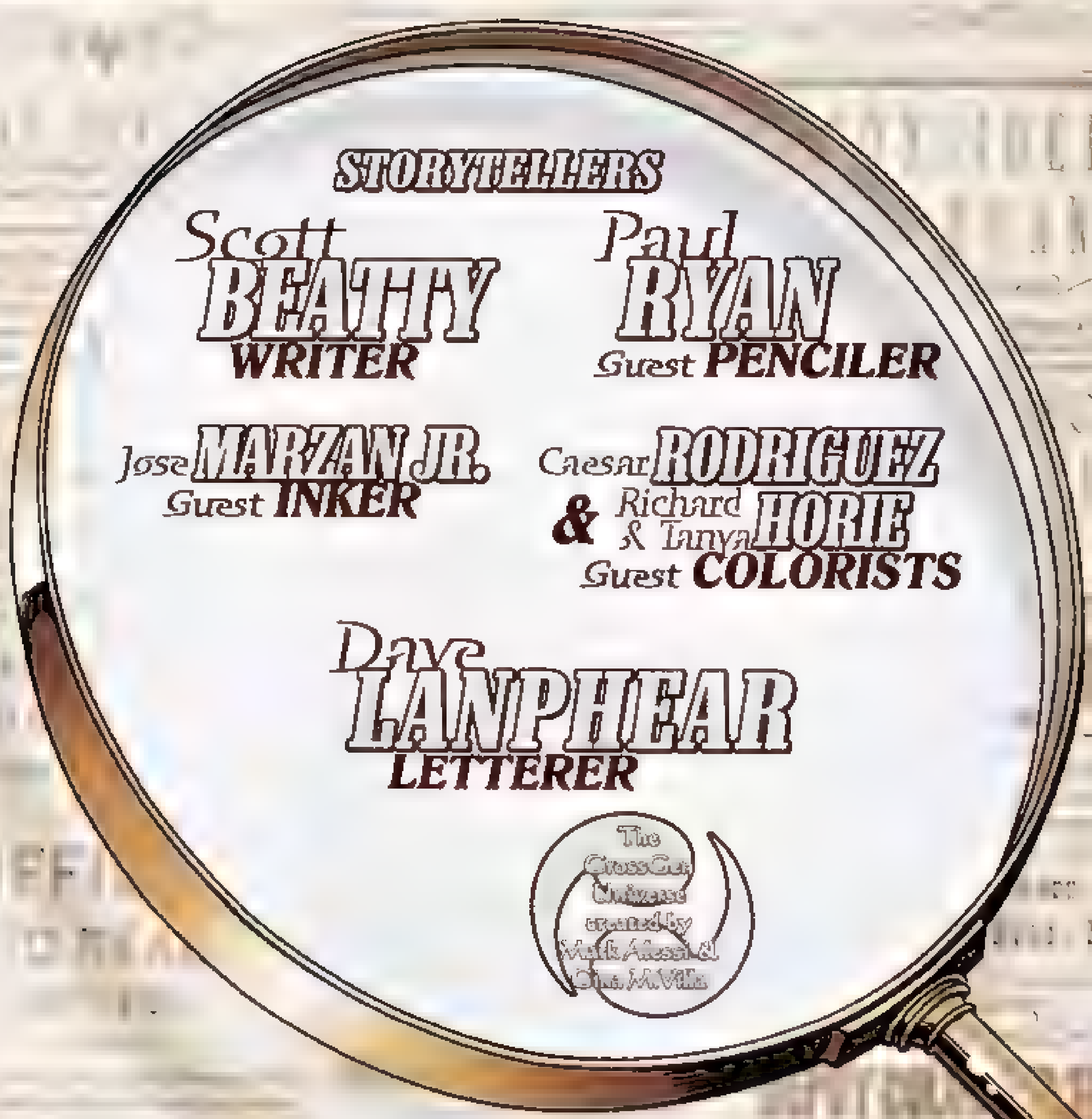
YOU SHOULD SEE FOR YOURSELF

RUFUS STRATHMORE HAS BEEN *POISONED*

BUT BY WHOM, SIMON?

OR WHAT?

BURF



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21

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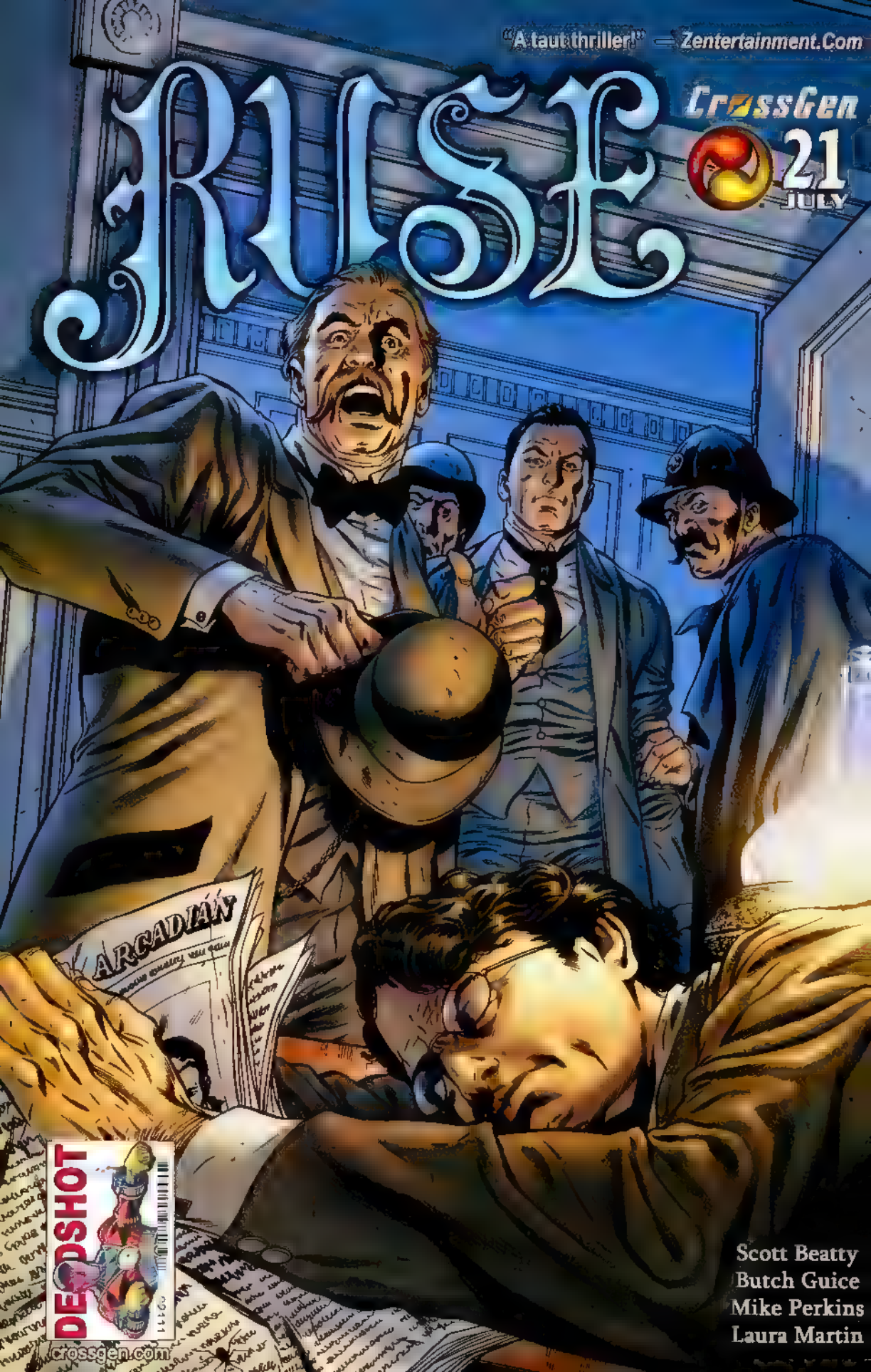


DEADSHOT

crossgen.com

Scott Beatty
Butch Guice
Mike Perkins
Laura Martin

The PENNY ARCADIAN

Copiously Illustrated — Afternoon Edition, Price One Penny

ARCHARD ARRESTED!

ACCUSED OF POISONING POLITICO

Partingtonians of every social strata were shocked yesterday to learn that Simon Archard, long regarded as the city's favorite son, was arrested and arraigned for the murder of Selectman C. Rufus Strathmore.

According to court sources, Strathmore was among a number of notable citizens — including Mayor Charles Bullrond and Police Commissioner Theopolous Morton — invited to Archard's sprawling residence for an evening of socializing that some conjecture was intended to boost the detective's waning public image within a community which may yet hold him partly responsible for the "Holey Thursday" terroristic attack on Partington.

As readers of the *Penny Arcadian* well know, the ground-shaking calamity suffered by our fair city was masterminded by Archard's former mentor and associate, Malcolm Lightbourne, a rogue who has yet to be brought before the courts and made accountable for his diabolical deeds.

In recent weeks, the late Selectman Strathmore composed a series of scathing editorialisations in this and other journalistic publications decrying Archard and his connection to a crime that nearly led to Partington's complete and utter ruin.

Witnesses at Archard's gathering report that Strathmore, the victim of a suspected poisoning, was seen chatting amicably with the sleuth some time before his death. Although unsubstantiated, the facts of the case place Strathmore alone with Archard in the host's locked study, where some say an argument was to be overheard prior to what would appear to be his untimely demise.

Commissioner Morton himself has gone on record to confirm that the senior constable was present the night in question to find Strathmore's lifeless body in the moments following the politico's death.

Also on hand, in the presumed homicide's aftermath, were Mayor Bullrond and Archard's assistant, Miss Emma Bishop, herself a resident of Archard's domicile, a converted cathedral in the heart of our city.

Simon Archard has denied killing Strathmore, despite their contentious relationship, which some assume was prelude to the selectman's poisoned end.

Although a trial date is yet to be established, Archard — who opted not to comment here — has been consigned to the House of Corrections in the interim after refusing to post bail on his own behalf.

Meanwhile, Mayor Bullrond, an admitted friend and supporter of Archard, has called for a more thorough investigation. **...PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE**

SIMON ARCHARD BEING LED AWAY IN IRONS FOLLOWING HIS ARRAIGNMENT FOR HOMICIDE

OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

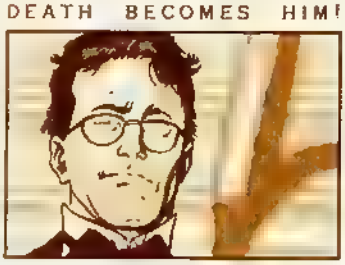
PARTINGTON'S FAVORITE SON? IS HIS MIND STILL RAZOR-SHARP?

EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY, HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

C. RUFUS STRATHMORE

SHARP-TONGUED SELECTMAN, DEATH BECOMES HIM!



FUNERARY NOTICE

EMENDATION

C. RUFUS STRATHMORE. Please be advised that the interment proceedings for Partington Selectman C. Rufus Strathmore previously announced to commence this afternoon at 6 o'clock within the Whispering Meadows Ossuary have been CANCELED. Mister Strathmore will instead be cremated in a private ceremony at Scrimm's Sepulcher. By the Widow Strathmore's request, mourners are discouraged from sending floral arrangements or donations in her departed husband's name.

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

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FRESH FISH 'ERE!
CATCH O' THE DAY!
GETCHER 'ALIBUTS!
GETCHER 'ERRINGS!
RIGHT THIS WAY ARCHARD
'FRAID YOU'LL HAVE TO EMPTY OUT YOUR POCKETS OF COINS AND WHATNOT
IF IT'S ANY CONSOLATION, WE DON'T BELIEVE YOU DID IT
KILLIN' RUFUS STRATHMORE THAT IS
WHATEVER DO YOU MEAN?
I APPRECIATE YOUR FAITH
FACE THE TRUTH, ARCHARD--
THIS IS ALL I HAVE
NO ONE WANTS YOU HERE
NOTHING OF VALUE TO REDEEM ME
PITY

THIS WAY

SPLUH!

THE CANE, TOO

ERK!

CAN'T HAVE YOU GOING INSIDE WITH A *CUDGEL* AND ALL

SKRINK

SURELY YOU JEST

S THIS YOUR IDEA OF A *JOKE*, STRATHMORE?

IT'S JUST POLICY AND ALL

BARBARIANS

=hic=

BURF

=hic=

A MOMENT WITH YOUR CHARGE, MEN

WHAT'S HAPPENED, SIMON?

I AM THE MAYOR, AFTER ALL

I COULD GRANT YOU *AMNESTY*

FOR ALL YOU'VE DONE FOR PART.NGTON

AND FOR *ME*

IT WOULD DO LITTLE TO HELP MY PUBLIC IMAGE CHARLES

I'M SURE SOMEONE WILL STEP FORWARD TO PROVE MY *INNOCENCE*

MAYOR BULLROND !

MAY I HAVE A MOMENT OF *PRIVACY* WITH SIMON?

OF COURSE

TELL ME YOU DIDN'T DO THIS

I DIDN'T DO THIS

THE DOOR WAS *BOLTED* STRATHMORE AND I WERE *ALONE* THE BOTTLE OF BRANDY WAS *NEW*

A LOCKED ROOM MYSTERY IF EVER THERE WAS

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

WHAT SHALL *YOU* DO?

SOLVE IT?

I SHOULD CERTAINLY HOPE SO

CLANK

EMMA, THINGS ARE NOT AS THEY *SEEM*

AN UNDERSTATEMENT TO BE SURE, SIMON

WELL, WELL, WELL

DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE, MY FELLOW BUTLERS BURGLARS, AND BLACKMAILERS?

LOOK WHO'S DONE IT NOW!

GET 'EM WHILE THEY'RE FRESH!

YEWL HAVE TO PETITION TH' WARDEN FOR VISIT.N', MISS

705

THANK YOU, CAPTAIN

I'LL DO JUST THAT

'ERRINGS READY TO FRY!

A MURDER HAS BEEN COMMITTED

BY ALL APPEARANCES, THE BLOOD IS ON SIMON ARCHARD'S HANDS

BUT AS SIMON SAYS, THINGS MAY NOT BE AS THEY SEEM

AND IF I AM TO PROVIDE ANY HOPE AT ALL, I MUST BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING

PUB

PROP: MARK PU

CARTER

THE RESIDENCE

SIMON'S PERSONAL STUDY

THE CONSTABULARY HAVE CONFISCATED THE APPARENT MURDER WEAPON, A PURPORTEDLY POISONED BOTTLE OF BRANDY FROM SIMON'S LIQUOR CABINET

AS WELL, THEY'VE SWEPT UP THE SHARDS OF GLASS FROM STRATHMORE'S FALLEN SNIFTER

ALL ELSE THAT REMAINS IS THE STICKY TRACE OF EVAPORATED

→OUCH!←

CUT YOURSELF, EMMA DEAR?

JUST A SCRATCH, REALLY...

YOU WANTED TO SPEAK WITH TAMMY?

INDEED I DID, NELL

I WAS HOPING THAT TAMMY MIGHT ELABORATE ON HER "*BUSINESS*" ARRANGEMENT WITH THE LATE MISTER STRATHMORE

SOMETHING HE MIGHT HAVE SAID--

YOU MEAN *PILLOW TALK*, LUV?

I um

I MEAN ANYTHING HE MAY HAVE REVEALED TO YOU SITTING, STANDING, OR *OTHERWISE*, THAT WOULD SHED LIGHT ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS UNTIMELY END

RUFUS WASN'T AT ALL VERY *LIKEABLE*

AND HE WASN'T ALL THAT TALENTED IN THE--

TAMMY?

TAMMY, DID HE HAVE ANY *ENEMIES?*

SOMEONE WHO WOULD SEEK TO DO HIM HARM?

HE CERTAINLY HAD IT IN FOR *SIMON*

TALKED ABOUT HIM ALL THE TIME WHEN HE WASN'T--

IT'S NOT--

--uh.. IT'S NOT UNCOMMON FOR *POLITICIANS* TO HAVE ENEMIES

STARTING WITH THEIR JEALOUS WIVES

INTERESTING

THAT WOULDN'T BE A *SLIVER* FROM MISTER STRATHMORE'S POISONED CHALICE, EMMA DEAR?

YES. IT WOULD.

LUCKY FOR *YOU* THAT NOT EVERYONE WHO DRANK FROM STRATHMORE'S GLASS WAS FELLED BY THE POISON THAT KILLED THE SELECTMAN HIMSELF

CORRECT AGAIN, LADYBIRD NELL

THERE IS THAT LONE *WITNESS* - SAVE FOR SIMON HIMSELF - TO THIS MOST MYSTERIOUS MURDER

BURF

LEFT SOMETHING FOR SOMEONE *ELSE* TO STEP IN THIS TIME?

NOW COME ALONG **PLEASE**, CHESTER

MISS!

WHAT NOW?

Oh, IT'S *YOU*, MISS BISHOP!

RIGHT SORRY I AM TO HEAR ABOUT MISTER ARCHARD'S RUN OF BAD LUCK

THE HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS IS NO PLACE FOR THE LIKES OF *HIM*

ON THAT POINT WE'RE IN *AGREEMENT*, CONSTABLE

'OO'S THIS THEN?

GONE AND GOT YOURSELF A GUARD HOUND?

ACTUALLY, CHESTER HERE MIGHT HOLD THE KEY TO SIMON'S INNOCENCE

THIS LI'L DOG?

AND WHY *NOT?*

MISTER CROMBIE?

WITH *"INNOCENT"* ARCHARD IN IRONS, WHO ELSE WOULD SNIFF OUT THE *REAL* KILLER?

PERHAPS CHESTER ALREADY *HAS*

GRRURRR

SLANDER!

IAIN

COME ALONG NOW

THAT'S THE RIGHT IDEA, MISS WYNDHAM

~KEEP THE BEASTS TO THEIR *TETHERS*

HON.
CHARLES R. BULLROND
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

PLEASE CONTINUE WITH YOUR REPORT, PINGRY

AS I'VE ALREADY STATED, C. RUFUS STRATHMORE WAS IN OTHERWISE EXCELLENT HEALTH AT THE TIME OF HIS *EXPIRATION*

POST-MORTEM EXAMINATION SEEMS TO CONFIRM THE APPARENT CAUSE OF DEATH..

POISON

ALTHOUGH NEITHER THE REMAINING BOTTLED BRANDY NOR THE GLASS STRATHMORE DRANK FROM RETAIN TRACES OF THE *TOXICANT* THAT FELLED HIM

IT IS THE CONCLUSION OF THE CORONER THAT STRATHMORE'S DRINK *ALONE* WAS SPIKED WITH WHATEVER BANE OR BLIGHT~

BUT CHESTER DRANK FROM THE *SAME* GLASS.

OR *AROUND* IT AT THE VERY LEAST.

PERHAPS THE POISON IN QUESTION ONLY ADVERSELY AFFECTS HUMANS AND IS OTHERWISE *UNDETECTABLE*

A PLAUSIBLE THEORY

MISTER ARCHARD HIMSELF CERTAINLY HAS *KNOWLEDGE* OF SUCH ARCANE POTIONS

MISTER PINGRY, *HOW* CAN YOU PROPOSE SUCH A NOTION?

ON HOW MANY OCCASIONS HAS SIMON'S *"ARCANE"* KNOWLEDGE AIDED THE OFFICE OF THE CORONER?

TOO MANY TO RECOUNT ACCURATELY, MISS BISHOP

I AM MERELY ATTEMPTING OBJECTIVITY IN THE FACE OF SOME VERY ODD FACTS

ALL OF US HERE ARE ON *SIMON'S* SIDE IN THIS, MISS BISHOP

BUT UNFORTUNATELY, YOUR ONLY WITNESS IN THIS INVESTIGATION LACKS A CERTAIN DEGREE OF *CREDIBILITY*

WHAT SAY YOU, LITTLE FELLOW?

CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE?

BURF!

T.C.o.A.M.
CELEBRATOR
MEETING!

AND TO *WHAT*, MAY I ASK ARE YOU *CELEBRATING?*

WHY, WE'RE TOASTING SIMON ARCHARD'S *INCARCERATION*, OF COURSE

WE'VE EVERY RIGHT FOR *REVELRY*, OVERBUTLER!

WE'VE RAISED GLASSES BEFORE AND FOUND OUR REJOICES *DASHED*, GENTS.

YOU WELL KNOW THAT ARCHARD HAS A VERY NASTY HABIT OF *SURVIVING* OUR EVERY STRATEGEM

OVERBUTLER MARTYN, WE CREATED THIS CONSORTIUM *SPECIFICALLY* TO REVENGE OURSELVES UPON ARCHARD

AND NOW THAT'S *DONE*

IS IT?

ARCHARD'S LOVELY LITTLE ASSISTANT COULD WELL BE THE FLY IN OUR OINTMENT

I'VE HEARD TELL THAT SHE'S DETERMINED TO *EXONERATE* ARCHARD OF THE CHARGES LEVELED AGAINST HIM

BWAHA

CHORTLE

GUFFAW!

AHEM

REGARDLESS OF THE GIRL'S ABILITIES -OR *LACK* THEREOF- WE CAN'T ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN

CAN WE, GENTLEMEN?

MAXTEN LEPTON?

MISTER GRILLEN?

GETTING HARD TO SNEAK ABOUT WITHOUT *DETECTION*, OVERBUTLER SIR

VERY HARD

YOU NEED ONLY BURN THE MIDNIGHT OIL A BIT LONGER GENTS~

~AND THEN WE'LL CHAT ABOUT YOUR ADVANCEMENT WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION

BUT WHAT OF ARCHARD?

DO WE ALSO HAVE SPIES IN THE HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS?

AS A MATTER OF FACT WE *DO*

AND YOU WOULD ALL DO WELL TO CURB YOUR SNIDE REMARKS AND RECALL *WHO'S* IN CHARGE~

PERCY!

I DIDN'T REALIZE THAT YOU WERE *ENTERTAINING*

I'LL BE AWAITING MY NIGHTLY FOOTBATH WHEN YOU AND YOUR CHUMS ARE THROUGH SCHEMING AND SUCH

TOO BAD WE DIDN'T HAVE A SECRET PASSAGE INTO THE *PENITENTIARY*

OOH, YOU GREAT DUMMY, HAVEN'T YOU BEEN LISTENING? WE'RE ALREADY *THERE*

FRESH FISH ERE!

CAUGHT AND CUT THE SAME DAY!

THE NERVE OF 'IM!
THINK'S HE'LL BLOODY EAT WIT' US?
PAY TOLL.
COME AGAIN?
Ah, YES
LIONEL WOOSTER, IS IT?
STILL MUGGING PASSERSBY FOR POCKET CHANGE?
AND NO BRIDGE TO BE FOUND FOR TRIP-TRAPPING
HAVIN A *ROW*, LADS?
DOUBLE NEXT TIME
MISTER ARCHARD!
THE CONSORTIUM OF AGGRIEVED MAN-SERVANTS WOULD LIKE TO *CONGRATULATE* YOU
FOR WHAT?
FOR YOUR UNFORTUNATE *FALL* FROM GRACE!
=HINH!=
HAWHAHA HAHAH HA!
POCKET THAT SHIV, PHILBY
WARD'S COMIN'
TROUBLE HERE, ARCHARD?
CAPTAIN, I APPRECIATE YOUR MEN LOOKING OUT FOR MY *WELFARE*--
BUT I HAD THE SITUATION WELL IN HAND.
LOOKING OUT FOR *NOTHING*
I CAME TO FETCH YOU FOR YOUR VISITOR--
--AND A *FETCHING* ONE SHE IS.
FOR THE RIGHT PITTANCE, YOU COULD JUST BUY YOURSELF A BIT OF *CONJUGAL*, eh?
THAT IS NOT EVEN WORTHY OF *COMMENT*, CAPTAIN
EMMA--
SIMON, I INSIST YOU COMMENCE *INVOLVING* YOURSELF IN PROVING YOUR INNOCENCE
SURELY YOU CAN'T BE *SAFE* IN SUCH A PLACE AS THIS
I SEE.
I HAVE A PLAN TO INSURE A MORE *PEACEFUL* INCARCERATION.
PERHAPS THEN YOU CAN TURN YOUR UNBURDENED ATTENTIONS TO THE *FACTS* OF THIS CASE
I HAVE NOTHING TO ADD, EMMA
STRATHMORE DRANK THE BRANDY, SPUTTERED AND LISPED A BIT INCOHERENTLY, THEN DROPPED *DEAD* IN FRONT OF ME.
LISPED?
COULD THE POISON HAVE BURNT HIS TONGUE?
PERHAPS WE SHOULD CONSULT SOMEONE *SIMILARLY* AFFLICTED--
--WITH A *LISP*, THAT IS.
YOUNG ADELINE?
A *QUIP*, SIMON TO EASE OUR TENSIONS.
ACTUALLY, I HAD SOMEONE *ELSE* IN MIND

AT PARTINGTON UNIVERSITY

SPECIFICALLY, THE OFFICE OF DEAN WARREN SOMERSBY

=AHEM=

PENNY

ARCHARD

TRIAL SET

MY DEAR, THE EIGHT MINUTE INTERVAL BETWEEN CLASSES IS MY TIME, *SPECIFICALLY*

The PENNY

Copiously Illustrated

AND *UNTIL* THE BELL TOLLS

DING-DING-DING-DING-DIN

VERY WELL THEN--

MISS BISHOP!

WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY IT WAS YOU?

I DIDN'T WISH TO INTRUDE ON *YOUR* TIME, WARREN

RUBBISH!

PLEASE, YOU MUST SIT!

HOW MAY I SERVE YOU?

YOU'RE AWARE OF SIMON'S PRESENT *PREDICAMENT*.

HE MADE MENTION OF YOUR CAPACITY AS RECRUITER OF STUDENTS WITH *UNIQUE* ACADEMIC SKILLS

PERHAPS A CERTAIN INTEREST IN *PATHOLOGY* THIS TIME?

I KNOW *JUST* THE SCHOLAR, EMMA

AND IF WHAT I READ HERE IS TRUE, TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE *INDEED*

SERVICE F

SELECTMA

BALTIMOR

DAY

ELECTMAN

THAT'S IT, YOU SCOUNDRELS!

FORM UP A SINGLE LINE WITH YOUR FRESH LINENS!

AND NO SHOVING!

HAH.

TIME FOR TOLL

DO TELL?

MOVE IT ALONG, ARCHARD

--OR YOU MIGHT FIND YOURSELF BACKING INTO A *SHANK*, WOT?

NO CANE TO HIT ME NOW

WHICHEVER O' YOU THROWS THE *FIRST* BLOW GOES STRAIGHT TO THE SLOP PIT AND I'LL THUMP THE BOTH OF YOU ANYWAY IF TH.S LINE DOESN'T START MOVIN' *FORTHWITH*

FIRST BLOW, eh?

TOLL *TRIPLED* NOW

WHY NOT *QUINTUPLE* IT? A PORTION FOR EACH FINGER -

~OF MY FIST!

GISH

OUCHIES

TO THE SLOP PIT, MEN?

THAT'S RIGHT, ARCHARD.

DISSECTION OF THE CREATURE'S GULLET REVEALS AN ORGAN TRACT REMARKABLY SIMILAR TO

MISS LINDSEY, IF YOU COULD TEAR YOURSELF AWAY FROM YOUR EXPERIMENT

MISS EMMA BISHOP WOULD LIKE A WORD WITH YOU

PLEASE, CALL ME *JOHANNA*

DEAN SOMMERSBY SAID I MIGHT GET THE SUMMONS FROM MISTER ARCHARD ONE DAY

I DIDN'T EXPECT IT SO *SOON*

IF ONLY IT WERE UNDER *DIFFERENT* CIRCUMSTANCES JOHANNA

SIMON ARCHARD NEEDS YOUR *HELP*

"HE'S IN A VERY DARK PLACE RIGHT NOW WITH LITTLE HOPE OF *ESCAPE*"

THIS ONE'S BEEN *BRAWLIN'* A BIT

EXPECTED YOU TO BE A MODEL PRISONER, ARCHARD

I WAS *PROVOKED*

♫♩

I'LL WAGER YOU'LL BE A BIT MORE *AGREEABLE* AFTER A TIME IN THE PIT

A WORD OF ADVICE~

~HANG CLOSE TO THE SIDES A WHILE SLOP'LL BE DUMPER SHORTLY AND YOU'LL NOT WANT TO SPEND YOUR TIME DOWN HERE *DRENCHED* WITH IT

IN YOU GO!

KLAWK

I'LL WAGER YOU'RE =INH= *RIGHT*

RRROH

=PSSST=

MORE ADVICE, GUARD?

THE WARDS HAVE GONE BACK TO THEIR ROUNDS

THE CONSORTIUM HAS A *LONG* REACH, MISTER ARCHARD

OVERBUTLER MARTYN SENDS HIS *REGARDS*

YOU WANT ME TO DO *WHAT?*
CALL IT A BIT OF *POST*-POST MORTEM, JOHANNA
AND THAT'S ASSUMING WE'RE NOT TOO~
--LATE?
BUT STRATHMORE'S FUNERAL WASN'T SCHEDULED FOR ANOTHER HOUR!
DEAD BUGGER'S WIFEY WENT AND SOLD 'IS PLOT
'AD 'IM SENT OFF *'NUTHER* WAY, SHE DID.
"SENT OFF" *HOW* EXACTLY?
BY WAY OF THE CREMATORIUM *EXACTLY*
SHE WOULDN'T
I WOULD
AND YOU'LL HAVE NOTHING TO SAY OVER IT, RUFUS
YOU'LL HAVE TO ASK THE WIDOW STRATHMORE'S PERMISSION
SHE OPTED *AGAINST* A RELIGIOUS SERVICE
AS IF HE *DESERVED* ONE
WERE EITHER OF YOU COMELY GIRLS ONE OF HIS *TROLLOPS?*
WE ARE *NO* SUCH THING, MRS STRATHMORE
MY NAME IS EMMA BISHOP AND MY YOUNG FRIEND IS JOHANNA LINDSEY.
WE'RE *ASSOCIATES* OF SIMON ARCHARD
AND WE WERE HOPING YOU MIGHT GIVE US LEAVE TO EXAMINE YOUR HUSBAND'S BODY AND PROVE THAT SIMON *WASN'T* RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS DEATH.
WHY NOT?
I'M *FINISHED* WITH HIM
START WITH HIS *TONGUE* JOHANNA
QUITE A LOT OF SWELLING AND RIGIDITY
NOT *UNCOMMON* IN THE UNPRESERVED--
-HELLO, WHAT'S *THIS?*
A BIT OF *DISSOLVED* TISSUE HERE--
--AND TWO SMALL PRICKINGS
COULD IT BE WHERE HE TASTED THE POISON?
ONLY IF THE POISON HE DRANK WAS OF THE *BITING* VARIETY, MISS BISHOP
QUITE *BRIGHT*
ACTUALLY, IT'S *OVER*-CAST
YOU'LL GET YOUR EYES BACK SOON ENOUGH
I'LL BE FETCHING THIS BACK WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED
FINISHED WITH *WHAT?*
MY PRISON MEMOIRS?

I bribed the wards. You're not permitted visitations after your "scuffle". Venom killed Strathmore, I think. Not poison.

VENOM IS A POISON.

When the residence was razed, your terrariums were smashed. I need a tally of your "collection".

WHAT IS TAKING SO ONG?

I ASKED FOR A LIST NOT A DISSERTATION

VISIT'S FINISHED, ARCHARD

BACK TO THE PIT

YOUR TALENTS CONTINUE TO AMAZE ME, S.IMON

I NEVER KNEW THAT YOU COULD PRINT SO IMPOSSIBLY SMALL

ALL'S PRESENT AND COUNTED, MIZ EMMA

EVERY CREATURE BUT ONE

OOK?

WE'VE YET TO INVENTORY A SPIDER SIMON DESCRIBES AS HAVING A CURIOUS RED MARKING ON ITS BELLY...

WHERE ELSE COULD IT BE?

ANYWHERE BUT HERE

NOW SPREAD OUT AND SEARCH EVERY NOOK!

LOOK FOR SOMEPLACE DARK

HERE SPIDER, SPIDER

SOMEPLACE DRY

NO TELLTALE WEBSSS

BUT REMEMBER THAT IT IS ALSO SOMEPLACE DANGEROUS

CKY BUGGERS

CHKCHKCHK

AND WHILE THE AGENTS SEARCH ELSEWHERE, I RETURN TO THE BEGINNING

BUT WHERE COULD THE ARACHNID IN QUESTION SECRETE ITSELF BENEATH OUR NOTICE FOR SO LONG?

NO.

ABOVE IT, AND APPARENTLY MAKING A VERY NICE HOME FOR ITSELF AND ITS BROOD

AHA!

OH SO GENTLY EMMA

IT WOULD BE DISASTEROUS TO SPILL THE PERNICIOUS LITTLE

EMMA!

HAVE YOU FOUND -

THAT WAS INEVITABLE

RRRCH!
YOUR DINNER, SIR
SUCH AS IT IS
BON APPETIT!
-SNIFF-
BITTER ALMONDS
TOO SEASONED FOR MY PALATE
CRUNK
IT'S YOUR LUCKY DAY, ARCHARD!
UNLESS YOU'D LIKE TO POSTPONE RELEASE AND FINISH YOUR LAST PRISON MEAL eh?
OH
APPEARS THE MANSERVANTS ARE IN CHARGE OF THE GRUEL TODAY

"GENTLEMEN, FROM THE BEGINNING, C RUFUS STRATHMORE'S PUBLIC DISDAIN FOR SIMON ARCHARD HAS DISTRACTED US FROM THE REAL KILLER
"SIMON POURED BRANDY FOR TWO THAT NIGHT SANS ANY POISON
"UNBEKNOWNST TO EITHER A THIRD PARTY WAS PRESENT WITHIN THE LOCKED STUDY
" LATRODECTUS ARCADIENSIS, THE EASTERN DEATH THROES SPIDER
"LOOSED FROM SIMON'S TERRARIUM DURING HOLEY THURSDAY, IT LIKELY POISED UNSEEN ON THE LIP OF STRATHMORE'S GLASS
" AND WAS ACCIDENTALLY DRUNK WITH HIS BRANDY BITING STRATHMORE'S OWN ACID TONGUE
"BUT LIKE THE BRANDY, NOT SWALLOWED, BUT RATHER SPAT BACK REFLEXIVELY BEFORE STRATHMORE FELL
"IMAGINE IT WRITHING IN A PUDDLE OF BRANDY AND SMASHED GLASS ON SIMON'S FLOOR "
WHERE CHESTER LAPPED IT UP BEFORE THE POLICE COULD IDENTIFY ITS COMPLICITY

HAVE YOU un EXAMINED THE OLD PUP ALSO TO CONFIRM YOUR THEORY, MISS BISHOP?
A..AS
CHESTER'S "REGULARITY" ASSURES THAT ANY LINGERING EVIDENCE MAY BE SCATTERED UPON SOME WELL-TRODDEN CURB
BURF
BUT THESE TINY SPIDERLINGS WERE FOUND HATCHING FROM AN EGG CASE IN SIMON'S STUDY--
--AND WITH THEM WE CAN DEMONSTRATE THE POTENCY OF THEIR MOTHER'S VENOM TO AFFIRM MY DEDUCTIONS
JOHANNA?
DON'T BE ALARMED
REEK.
THE CREATURE SUFFERS FROM CANCEROUS TUMORS
REEK!
THIS AS MUCH A MERCY KILLING
REE:-
DEAD
LIMB CONTRACTIONS AND EXPECTORATIONS CONSISTENT WITH THE CONDITION OF STRATHMORE'S CORPSE
POOR THING

YOU GENTLEMEN OF THE PRESS MAY REPORT THAT I'M QUITE SATISFIED STRATHMORE'S UNTIMELY DEATH WAS PURELY ACCIDENTAL
AND THAT SIMON ARCHARD BORE NO INTENTIONAL MALICE AGAINST HIM
BUT WON'T THERE BE ANY PUNISHMENT AT ALL, MAYOR BULLROND?
FOR ARCHARD'S NEGLIGENCE IN KEEPING SUCH DEADLY BEASTIES WITHIN CITY LIMITS?
ONE WOULD THINK SO
BUT SIMON'S PENALTY WAS MERELY A FINE FOR KEEPING EXOTIC ANIMALS WITHOUT A PERMIT
AND TIME SERVED, OF COURSE
YOU COULD HAVE LOST FAR MORE THAN TIME, SIMON
BUT YOUR LIFE IS SPARED
YOUR SOILED REPUTATION MIGHT YET RISE ABOVE THE ASHES OF STRATHMORE'S FUNERAL PYRE
YOUR ENEMIES ARE SURELY REDUCED BY ONE
AND YOUR HOME IS FREE OF INTRUDING PESTS
IS THAT T. MISTER LEPTON?
RIGHT WHERE WE LEFT IT, MISTER GRELEN

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HIS MIND IS RAZOR-SHARP

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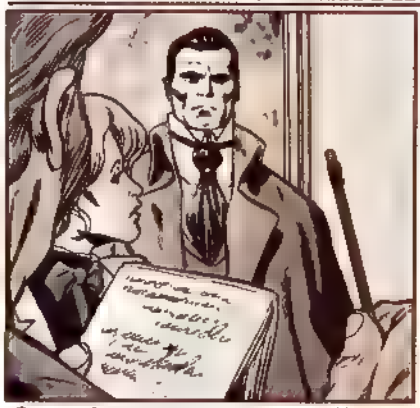
HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE

LEPTON & GRILLEN

VILLAINOUS VALETS
WITH MURDER IN MIND!

SELECTMAN'S DEATH RULED 'ACCIDENTAL'



SIMON ARCHARD DEPARTS THE HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS A FREE MAN

Following an intensive investigation, Police Commissioner Theo. M. Thornton reports that charges of murder have been summarily dismissed against detective Simon Archard.

Archard, who had been remanded to Partington's House of Corrections pending a juried trial, was also deemed innocent of any direct involvement in the untimely death of City Selectman C. Rufus Strathmore, who expired under mysterious circumstances while attending a social gathering at Archard's residence more than a week ago.

While initially thought to be the victim of a planned poisoning, a second post-mortem examination of Mister Strathmore revealed the bite of a rare arachnid, the Eastern Death-Throes Spider, one of a number of exotic animals kept by Archard for purposes of scientific study

Evidence brought to light by Archard's assistant, Miss Emma Bishop, indicated that this spider somehow escaped its glass enclosure during Malcolm Lightbourne's "Holey Thursday" [sic] terroristic attacks upon Partington months previous to Strathmore's death.

According to Commissioner Thornton, Archard assumed that the spider was crushed during those traumatic upheavals. But, rather, it instead spun a new web within the detective's study, where Selectman Strathmore had the misfortune of accidentally sipping the rather aggressive arachnid along with his brandy during the aforementioned soiree.

Prior to discovery of this damning evidence, the spider was itself ingested by a wayward hound cared for by the detective. Archard was subsequently arrested and taken into the Constabulary's custody until a recent recreation of the alleged crime proved him innocent of homicide. Archard has since been released from the House of Corrections and issued a public apology by several publications, including the Arcadian, for any commentary that may have been considered slanderous during his brief incarceration.

But although cleared of the previous charges against him, Partington's favorite son has otherwise been levied a minor fine for keeping dangerous specimens within city limits without official license or sanction to do so, a very minor infraction considering ...PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

SPIDER SENSE

Jackson Hollingsworth, Professor of Entomology at Partington University, assures the *Penny Arcadian* that concerned Partingtonians need not believe rumored speculation that their hearths might be made homes to the Eastern Death-Throes Spider of recent note

"To my current knowledge, Simon Archard possessed the only living sample of this very poisonous spider outside of its natural habitat. This particular arachnid is difficult to rear beyond the borders of its

endemic habitat, the arid sands of Temtuka," commented Hollingsworth.

For the edification of our readers, a photograph of the Eastern Death-Throes Spider has been printed herein

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

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I SSSEEEE YOU
HEH
YOU'RE LATE
DAWN'S NEARLY UPON US
WE'RE VERY SORRY MISTER RAINES.
MISTER GRILLEN FORGOT THE ETHER
AND THEN THE APOTHECARY WAS *CLOSED*.
SO WE HAD TO FORCE THE WINDOW...
Oh, ***SHUT UP*** THE BOTH OF YOU
WE'VE NOT MUCH TIME TO ACCOMPLISH OUR TASK BEFORE THESE RESIDENTS AWAKEN TO FIND PARTINGTON'S FAVORITE SON *DEAD* AND *DONE*

HERE?
NO, THAT'S NOT IT
MAYBE THIS ONE
NAY
WAIT, WAIT..
DON'T TELL ME--
~YOU'VE *LOST* THE SECRET ENTRANCE
WE CONCEALED IT VERY WELL
VERY WELL
WE MADE A SECRET LATCH FOR IT
NOW IF I JUST GIVE MY NOGGIN A MINUTE TO PONDER
KNIK
YEP THAT'S IT ALRIGHT
RIGHT WHERE WE LEFT IT
WELL?
WELL WHAT?
IF YOU'RE THROUGH *PONDERING*, WE'VE A MURDER TO DO!
AND GOOD MORNING TO YOU, LORD BRIXTON
I SEE THAT YOU'RE AN EARLY RISER AS WELL
LADYBIRD NELL ASSURES HER CLIENTS DISCRETION AND *ANONYMITY*, MISS PRESSMONK
I'D RATHER MY NAME *NOT* RESOUND TO THE TOPS OF THIS VERY UNORTHODOX CATHEDRAL
YOU'LL UNDERSTAND IF I PREFER TO SEE MYSELF OUT
AND YOU'LL UNDERSTAND IF I ASK YOU TO MIND THE DOOR AS YOU *SLINK* AWAY
IT TENDS TO SWELL IN THE DAMP AND NOT CLOSE PROPERLY
KREAKKKKK
♫ *AND SHE BREAKS THE FAST WITH A SMALL REPAST..* ♫
♫ *TRA-LA-LA-LA LA!* ♫
WHO NEEDS A HOUSE CHEF WHEN YOU'VE GOT THE CULINARY ACUMEN OF MISS OPHELIA PRESSMONK, MISTRESS OF SANDWICHES THAT ARE SIMPLY TO DIE FOR!
ALTHOUGH THIS HOUSE COULD CERTAINLY BENEFIT FROM THE TOUCH OF A WELL MANNERED BUTLER
OR A MERE *MANSERVANT* EVEN
BUT *NOOOO* ♫
KRIK
NOT IN *THIS* RESIDENCE
NO SUCH AMENITIES FOR SKINFLINT SI--

=MUMMPH=

QUIET, YOU.

JUST INHALE THE CALMING VAPORS AND LET THE ETHER DO ITS WORK.

JEPTON! GRILLEN!

STOP DAWDLING!

WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?

WE HAD A SLIGHT PROBLEM...

I GOT STUCK A BIT

WHUZZAH?

JUST A STORM, EMMA.

. ROUSING YOU FROM AN OTHERWISE FITFUL SLEEP AS YOU CONTINUE TO IMAGINE THINGS THAT MIGHT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT

SO WHY NOT ACCEPT YOUR FATE AND EMBRACE THE DAWN

SUCH AS IT IS

RUH. RUH..

BURF?

RURRR

=SNERF=

RUH.. RUH.

HAHAHA HAHA!

RUFF!

SPLOSH

BURF!

THOUGHT NO ONE WOULD NOTISSSE YOU?

DIDN'T YOU?

KLUD

YES.

IT WOULD APPEAR THAT I'M THE ONLY INSOMNIAC HAUNTING THE RESIDENCE THIS DREADFUL MORNING

MMM

OR PERHAPS I'M PREMATURE IN SPOUTING SUCH AN OBVIOUS ASSESSMENT

IT SOUNDS AS THOUGH TIFFANY IS ENTERTAINING

YOU NEEDN'T STRUGGLE SO, LASS

MMMMM!

WE'RE OF THE SERVICE CLASS JUST LIKE YOU

MMMMM!

TAKE ONE OF THESE ETHER-SOAKED HANDKERCHIEFS

MAKE SURE SHE'S PROPERLY UNCONSCIOUS BEFORE YOU BIND AND GAG HER

APPARENTLY, MICHELLE HAS BEEN ENTERTAINING ALSO.

GOOD MORNING ALL

MIZ EMMA!

I WUZ

I.

WUZ

JUST LOOKING IN ON THIS STORMY MORN, I'M CERTAIN

Uh

THAT WOULD BE IT

BE SURE TO WIPE YOUR FEET, PETE

SOMEONE COULD SLIP IN YOUR WET TRACKS AND HAVE A *NASTY* FALL

BUT, PETER DEAR

HOW COULD YOU HAVE LEFT THOSE PUDDLES?

DON'T WORRY OVER IT.

I RECKON SHE WUZ JUS' BEIN' POLITE AN' ALL

BEST TO HEED YOUR STEPPING, FRIEND, YOUNG MISS.

MMEE?!

NO WORRIES THEN

MMMM...

JUST BREATHE DEEPLY AND HAVE BLISSFUL DREAMS

BIND AND GAG THIS ONE TOO, MISTER RAINES?

AND STASH HER SOMEWHERE SHE WON'T TROUBLE US

WIPE UP THOSE SODDEN FOOTPRINTS ALSO

WE AGGRIEVED MANSERVANTS SHOULD ALWAYS LEAVE A CRIME SCENE *TIDY*

WHAT'S THIS?

BREAKFAST, READY AND WAITING?

IF I HELD ANY LINGERING HOPE OF NAPPING YET BEFORE THE DAY TRULY BEGINS, A HEAVY MEAL WOULD SURELY FUEL MORE PARANOID FANCIES

AS IF ANYONE COULD SLEEP THROUGH THE CLASH OF LIGHTNING AND RAIN OUTSIDE

SNERZZZ

I REALLY MUSTN'T JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS.

EVIDENTLY, ANYONE BUT ME CAN SLEEP THROUGH THE CLAMOR

ONE NEED ONLY DRAW THE CURTAINS TO BLOCK OUT ANY INTRUSIONS.

KLOP

STRANGE HOW THE HIGH CEILINGS OF THIS LAPSED CATHEDRAL ECHO AND MULTIPLY THE SOUNDS OF ONE'S FOOTFALLS.

COULD SOMEONE BE TENDING TO THE COLLECTION OF CREEPY-CRAWLIES SO EARLY?

SIMON?

ALRIGHT THEN

I'M AFRAID YOU VENOMOUS NASTIES WILL HAVE TO WAIT FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO FEED YOUR MANDIBLES AND PINCERS AND WHATNOT

SHOULD'VE KICKED THE *OTHER* ONE, MISTER RAINES

LOUIS HAS GOT A NASTY INGROWN NAIL ON THAT FOOT. HE WAS

I TOLD YOU SIMPLETONS TO *HIDE* THE GIRL

NOT LEAVE HER LOLLING IN PLAIN SIGHT!

THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE A *CLANDESTINE* KILLING!

NOW FIND A SUITABLE CLOSET AND STUFF THE STRUMPET IN IT!

"FIND A CLOSET", HE SAYS

HOIST HER LEGS, LOUIS

I SHOULD AVERT MY EYES, SHOULDN'T I?

SHOCKING

SIMPLY *SHOCKING*

JUST LOOKIN' AT THE PATINA OF DUST GATHERING ABOUT

MAYBE MISTER ARCHARD COULD USE A CHAMBER MAID OR TWO

YOU'RE LOSING YOUR GRIP, LOUIS

OH THE GIRL I MEAN

SHE'S [illegible]

SHO

eh

EH

SNERT!

WAS THAT A SNEEZE?

OH MY

AVERT YOUR EYES, LOUIS

YOU BUMBLING FOOLS!

WAS THAT A BUMP?

LOOK AT ME! BETWEEN MY *DRIPPINGS* AND YOUR *DROPPINGS*, IT'S A WONDER WE HAVEN'T ALREADY BEEN FOUND OUT!

YOUR NOSE *IS* RUNNING A BIT, MISTER RAINES

PERHAPS YOU MIGHT NEED A HANDKERCHIEF?

OF COURSE I NEED A HANDKERCHIEF!

OH, DEAR ME

THERE IT IS AGAIN!

CERTAINLY NOT THE DIN OF THUNDER

HELLO, DOWNSTAIRS! HAS SOMEONE FALLEN?

GASP!

UP THERE! WE'RE SEEN!

INTRUDERS!

AFTER HER!

I'VE GOT TO WARN SIMON AND THE OTHERS!

BUT ONLY IF I'M ABLE TO ELUDE THESE ROGUES FIRST

GIVEN THE LABYRINTHINE TWISTS AND TURNS WITHIN THE RESIDENCE, I SHOULD HAVE NO GREAT DIFFICULTY

WHY, I THINK SHE'S AIMING FOR THE *ARBORETUM!*

HOW COULD THEY KNOW THIS PATH LED STRAIGHT TO THE ARBORETUM?

UNLESS

UNLESS THEY'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE

DID YOU SEE THAT?

I

I

I THINK WE'D BEST GO 'ROUND THE *OTHER* WAY

ALL THIS EXCITEMENT HAS GOT US SEEING *PHANTASMS*

BUT THE LASS IS

NOT QUITE SURE WHY THOSE STRANGE MEN HALTED THEIR PURSUIT

I'VE UNDOUBTEDLY LEFT A TRAIL OF POLLEN FROM THE ARBORETUM IN MY MAD DASH THROUGH THE FLORA

PERHAPS THEY INTEND TO CUT ME OFF BEFORE I'VE ALERTED—

--SIMON!

OR AM I SIMPLY SIGNALLING THEM TO MY OWN LOCATION WITHIN THIS MAZE?

AND WHERE IS THE MASTER OF THIS HOUSE?

NOT IN HIS STUDY

HIS QUARTERS?

SIMON?

EMPTY

COULD HE BE CAPTURED ALREADY?

OR WORSE?

WE'RE LOST, WE ARE

HOW COULD WE BE LOST, LOUIS?

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE WE BEEN HERE BEFORE?

HOW MANY NIGHTS DID WE TIPTOE THROUGH THESE GRAND HALLS PLANNING THIS VERY ATTACK?

Oh, BOTHER

WE ARE LOST

PERHAPS IT'S BECAUSE WE'VE NEVER BEEN HERE DURING THE DAY OR BY MORNING'S EARLY LIGHT AT THE LEAST

AND WHAT WITH MISTER RAINES FLUSTERING US BY BEING SO VERY IMPATIENT AND ACCIDENTALLY INHALING THE ETHER.

WE OUGHT NOT TO LEAVE WITHOUT MURDERING ARCHARD

OVERBUTLER MARTYN WILL SURELY DEMOTE US. OR WORSE

NO, HE WON'T, LOUIS

I'VE GOT A PLAN

YOU DO?

THE THINK-TANK?

SIMON?

SCRATCHING FROM WITHIN?

BURF!

Oh, IT'S YOU

CHESTER, HOW DID

EEEK!

WHO.

WHO'S DOWN THERE?

EMMA, YOU KNOW FULL WELL THAT SCREAMING IS SO VERY *CONTRARY* TO STEALTH

SIMON, THE *LEAST* YOU COULD DO WOULD BE TO HELP ME REMOVE LUCIUS' HOOD AND CONFIRM HE'S BREATHING

BUT HIS. HIS FACE

THAT RASPING NOISE YOU HEAR *IS* HIS BREATHING

LOOKS EXACTLY AS IT DID WHEN I FIRST MET HIM.

AND I'M CERTAIN LUCIUS WOULD APPRECIATE ROUSING WITH HIS HOOD *INTACT*

HE'S QUITE BASHFUL

YOU'RE AWARE THAT THERE ARE SEVERAL STRANGERS LURKING ABOUT THE RESIDENCE?

TWO BY MY COUNT, PERHAPS *MORE*

YES, I AM MOST CERTAINLY *AWARE*

LUCIUS BROUGHT THEM TO MY ATTENTION.

IN FACT, HE AND I WERE RECONNOITERING THE RESIDENCE SEPARATELY WHEN I FOUND HIM UNCONSCIOUS HERE IN THE BELFRY

I SEALED LUCIUS AND CHESTER IN THE THINK-TANK TO KEEP THEM BOTH OUT OF HARM'S WAY

Hmph. *CORDITE*

WHAT IS IT YOU'VE FOUND?

SOME-THING VERY TROUBLING

WE'LL GO BY WAY OF THE *INTERIOR PASSAGES*

IF WE SURVIVE THIS BREACH OF SECURITY, PERHAPS YOU'LL TAKE TIME TO SHOW ME THE INTRACACIES OF ALL THESE SECRET CUBBIES

CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR, EMMA

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

THE BOWELS OF THE RESIDENCE.

SOMEWHERE YOU'VE NEVER BEEN

THE SHOOTING RANGE

RIGHTY THEN, HERE'S THE PLAN

I'LL BE THE *BAIT* WHAT LURES ARCHARD BACK HERE, WHERE YOU'LL WAYLAY HIM AND SEPARATE HIS HEAD FROM HIS SHOULDERS

CHOPETY-CHOP, GOT IT?

CHAZ?

YES, WHAT IS IT?

I THINK I SHOULD HAVE GONE TO THE LOO BEFORE CLIMBING INTO THE ARMOR

WHUMP!

YOU COULD HAVE WARNED ME THAT THE *LADDER* ENDED WITH A *CHUTE*

AND RUIN THE SURPRISE?

I TAKE IT THAT *THIS* IS THE SHOOTING RANGE?

HOW IS IT THAT YOU'VE KEPT THIS ROOM SECRET FOR SO LONG?

IT'S WELL-INSULATED WITH ACOUSTIC BAFFLES TO STIFLE THE SOUNDS OF--

BLAST

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

THERE'S A GUN LOOSE IN THE RESIDENCE

A VERY OLD BUT USUALLY *RELIABLE* PISTOL

OH MY POUNDING THROBBING SINGING HEAD

LOOK AT THAT

NEITHER BOUND NOR GAGGED

...NOR *STUFFED* IN A CLOSET!

I SWEAR THIS..

ARCHARD WILL BE *DEAD* BEFORE DA-

--BEFORE *BRUNCH*... IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO...

THAT I DOUBT

WELL, I'M BACK

STILL NO HIDE OR HAIR OF ARCHARD OR HIS PRETTY ASSISTANT.

YOU'LL HAVE TO BE PATIENT, LOUIS, MY CHUM

AND HOLD YOUR WATER A WEE BIT LONGER

SIMON, DO YOU HEAR WHAT--

SHUSH

VOICES *NO*

A *SINGLE* VOICE BEYOND THE WALL

DID YOU SAY SOMETHING LOUIS?

Ohhh I GET YOUR GAME, CHUM

GIVING ME THE OLD *BRUSH-OFF* BECAUSE I MADE YOU WEAR THE ARMOR WITHOUT TAKING CARE OF YOUR PRIVATE BUSINESS FIRSTLY

WELL, IF THAT'S HOW YOU'LL B~

-*BLOODY HELL!*

FOUR FIVE?!

I'VE GONE DOWN THE *WRONG* CORRIDOR!

SNAK

THE WAY IS CLEAR

FOR THE MOMENT, AT LEAST

THESE INTRUDERS ARE CERTAINLY *BRAZEN* FOR ATTACKING DURING WAKING HOURS

OR VERY *STUPID*

AND DOES THAT MAKE THEM *MORE* OR *LESS* DANGEROUS, SIMON?

IT MARKS THEM AS *BOLD*

OR *DESPERATE*

SO MANY CHOICES

TELL ME, DO YOU TRULY KNOW WHERE WE ARE WITHIN THE RESIDENCE?

I KNOW *PRECISELY* WHERE WE ARE.

THIRD FLOOR, LEFT OF THE GRAND STAIRWELL, EASTERN FACE OF THE CATHEDRAL

I KNOW EACH NOOK AND CRANNY WITHIN MY HOME.

EVERY LAST NUANCE AND DETAIL.

FOR INSTANCE, THAT FOURTH CENTURY ARCADIUM ARMOR IS ALWAYS DISPLAYED WITH LEFT GLOVE ATOP THE RIGHT AS IT GRIPS THE HEAVY BROADSWORD

THERE

THIS ONE HAS TO BE THE WAY

HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO BALANCE THE SWORD WITH THE SUIT~

~*EMPTY?!*

SIMON, ONE OF THEM IS HERE!

INSIDE THE ARMOR!

IT'S A TRAP!

FINALLY!

YES, FINALLY

KLOP

UNG!

THE PISTOL IS IT~?

FLOATING?

BY ALL APPEARANCES, *YES.* BUT IN TRUTH, *NO*

I SEE YOU KEPT YOUR PROMISE

HAD YOU ANY DOUBTS?

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT THE PISTOL YOU'RE BRANDISHING HASN'T BEEN FIRED IN AGES.

WHO ARE YOU ALL TALKING TO?

I CAN'T SCARCELY SEE A THING THROUGH THIS VISOR!

FORGET BOLD AND BRAZEN

OUR INTRUDER IS *BUMBLING* AND *BLIND*

WHY, YOU--!

SIMON, DON'T PROVOKE HIM--

THE SWORD!

NO!

THAT'S RIGHT

CHOPETY-CHOP!

THE AGGRIEVED MANSERVANTS FINALLY WIN!

BLA

BANG

KAPWING

OOF!

KLANG

A *TELESTROUDIAN!*

THE VERY THING.

INVISIBLE FROM DAWN TO DUSK.

BY AN INHERITED ACCIDENT OF BIRTH

UNTIL DUSTED WITH SPENT GUN-POWDER

WE TOLD YOU, ARCHARD

WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECTED IT, THAT WOULD BE *US.*

BUT THEN WHY SPARE ME A *BEHEADING* JUST NOW?

YOUR DEATH BELONGS TO TELESTROUD

AND *ONLY* TELESTROUD

NOT THISSSS DAY

HARD TO HIDE IN HERE, ISSSN'T IT?

ANOTHER DAY THEN!

WHERE WOULD HE GO?

SOME-WHERE WITH MORE LIGHT!

BUT I THOUGHT THE TELESTROUDIANS ARE ALLERGIC?

PAINFULLY SO.

THE ARBORETUM!

TO CONCEAL HIM JUST LONG ENOUGH TO WIPE AWAY THE GUNPOWDER BURNS?

YES, BUT NOT ACCOUNTING FOR--

GISHOO!

~THE CLINGING POLLEN

SIMON, LOOK--

~OUT

YOU COULD HURT SOMEONE WITH THAT

THANK YOU FOR NOT RUNNING ME THROUGH

MARK MY WORDS.. .THE EXPERIENCE OFFERS *LITTLE* TO RECOMMEND IT

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE TELESTROUDIAN ASSASSIN?
Oh, MY HEAD
WHO?
EVERYONE!
THE INVISIBLE ASSASSIN IS STILL AT-LARGE AND~
DON'T BOTHER
HE'S SURELY GONE
AIEEEE
OH DEAR, NO
THRUNK
NO
SHE
SHE FELL
MICHELLE
HER NECK BROKEN
IS IS THERE ANY SIGN OF HIM?
NO
AND THERE WON'T BE
THE SUN'S COMING UP

The PENNY ARCADIAN
Page 23... A Bazaar of Gadgetry, Wares, Innocuous Pastimes, & Acknowledgements
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"The pages burst with detail and atmosphere...Butch Guice's art is outstanding!" — *Publishers Weekly*

CrossGen

23 SEPT

RISE

Scott Beatty
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The TELESTROUD NIGHTLY

Insight for the Unseen — One Schilling

HERO RETURNS!

SADLY, ARCHARD STILL LIVES

Last eveningtide brought with it the reappearance of Dagnar Fuerstadt, Telestroud's emissary abroad dispatched to punish the devilish detective Simon Archard for the sins he and his indevout ingénue Emma Bishop wrought upon the god-fearing folk of our land.

Traveling by night to avoid the sun's pitiless rays, Fuerstadt crept within spitting distance of ending Archard's life, as by the Burgomeister's decree. With regret, Fuerstadt was instead compelled to spare Archard from a trio of murderous assassins lest Telestroud be denied its long awaited and much deserved retribution.

Fuerstadt escaped Archard's clutches, but not before reducing the detective's remorseless ranks by one. Telestroud's devoted son returned with a smattering of seared flesh to mark his unavoidable journey home by damning daylight.

A welcomefest for Fuerstadt will commence at the Empty Stein Tavern past dark. Come one and all to hear him recount his deadly mission among the outlandish visibles!

WANTED!

Burgomeister Osgold has announced that the towne's bounty on Simon Archard and Emma Bishop will be increased five-fold. Any able and willing male citizen of Telestroud may claim a substantial sum of silver with proof positive of the foreign enemies' painful deaths.

SIMON ARCHARD

EMMA BISHOP

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ONCE MORE, AN AGENT HAS FALLEN.

FROM THE SOIL WE ALL SPROUT FORTH

AND TO THE LOAM WE MUST RETURN

SO GOETH MICHELLE TO THE LAND THAT BIRTHS US, SUSTAINS US, AND FOREVER RECLAIMS US.

IF I WERE A **DEVOUT**--AND NOT JUST ONE WHO ONCE DISGUISED HERSELF IN DRUIDIC ROBES--I MIGHT FIND SOME SMALL **SOLACE** IN THE EULOGY OFFERED BY THE PRIESTESS.

BUT MICHELLE PASSERDINE WAS MY **FRIEND**.

AND WHILE THE UNALTERABLE CYCLE OF BIRTH AND DEATH MAKES PERFECT RATIONAL SENSE

I FAIL TO SEE WHY THE LIVING FEEL SUCH NEED TO REDUCE IT TO THE ACADEMIC

WE TAKE THE *SAME* TESTS AND STUDY JUST AS HARD, LADIES

WHY SHOULD EQUITABLE WAGES AND EMPLOYMENT PARITY BE SO FAR FROM *OUR* REACH?

THEN TELL ME THIS DOCTOR MUNSTER

IF *CONTINENTAL DRIFT* S JUST A HEAP OF *POPPYCOCK*, THEN WHY HAVE COMPET NG PALEOGRAPHERS DISCOVERED UNCANNILY SIM .AR FOSS.LS DAT NG TO THE EXACT SAME GEOLOGIC ERAS ON *EACH* OF THE N NE ARCADIAN CONTINENTS?

FWAP FWAP FWAP FWAP FWAP FWAP FWAP FWAP FWAP FWAP

THERE

THE CARILLON TOL.S ON THE HOUR MY DEAR

FINEST SET OF P.PES IN *ANY* POLYTECHNIC

TOK

CHIK CHAK

COMMIT *THIS* THEOREM TO MEMORY PROFESSOR

EH?

SPIT!

KOW

BUT NO MATTER HOW WE RATIONALIZE HER PASSING, MICHELLE'S DEATH IS NO LESS A TRAGEDY

A STUPID SENSELESS TRAGEDY

DOES YOUR CIRCLE OF GROWTH ACCOUNT FOR INVISIBLE ASSASSINS, PRIESTESS?

MICHELLE DIED AS SHE LIVED

FULL OF LOVE AND A ZEAL FOR LIFE

SHE WAS PUSHED FROM A STAIRWELL AND FELL TO HER UNTIMELY END, PRIESTESS.

THE SOUND OF HER NECK BREAKING ECHOED THROUGHOUT THE RESIDENCE LIKE A GUN--

--SHOT

KOW

IN DEATH, MICHELLE'S BODY SHALL USHER FORTH NEW LIFE

LET THESE CUTTINGS BE THE FIRST TO KNOW THE FERTILE SANCTITY OF HER TRANS TION TO THE NEXT

GROWTH WILL ENDURE

LIFE WILL ENDURE

WILL IT, PRIESTESS?

FIRST OTTO PRESSMONK

AND NOW MICHELLE

SIMON ARCHARD CAN ILL AFFORD TO LOSE ANY MORE

I'M GONNA FIND THE FELLA AND MAKE HIM PAY IS WHAT!

YOU'LL DO *NO* SUCH THING, PETE!

WHO'S THE *GENTLEMAN* NOW, SIMON?

THAT SNEAKY SEE-THROUGH KILLED SWEET MICHELLE AND YOU WON'T EVEN PAY RESPECTS AT HER GRAVESIDE.

IF YOU AIN'T GONNA HELP ME MAKE THAT FELLA FROM TELESTROUD ACCOUNT FOR WHUT HE DONE, THEN I'LL JUST GO *ELSEWHERES!*

I WON'T HELP YOU IN *REVENGE*, PETE

AND YOU WILL NOT PURSUE THIS VENDETTA *HERE* OR *ANYWHERE* AS LONG AS YOU ARE IN MY EMPLOY

WELL THEN, MAYBE I SHOULDN'T OUGHTA WORK FOR YOU NO MORE

GENTLEMEN, TH.S IS A *FUNERAL!*

IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.

JUST LET IT GO, PETE.

LET'SSS TAKE A SSSSTROLL, PETE

BLOODY COLD FISH IS WHAT

AFTER ALL THAT'S HAPPENED, I THOUGHT *YOU* MOST OF ALL WOULD UNDERSTAND OUR NEED TO PULL TOGETHER

AT THIS TIME *ESPECIALLY,* SIMON

WE WOULDN'T BE IN THIS POSITION HAD I REMAINED TRUE TO MY OWN PRINCIPLES

MEANING *WHAT* PRECISELY?

MEANING THAT *CHANGES* ARE IN THE OFFING, MISS BISHOP

I FOR ONE COULD DO WITH A CHANGE

YOU'.L NOT WEAR ANY MORE BLACK, EMMA

NO, RESERVE THAT COLOUR FOR MY MOOD AND MY PRESENT REGARD FOR SIMON

.ADIES?

YOU LOOK AS IF YOU'RE DEPARTING ON *HOLIDAY*

WHAT A SPLENDID IDEA TO SHAKE OFF THE PALLOR HANGING OVER THIS RESIDENCE

WE'RE MOVING OUT, EMMA

THE GIRLS AND I

ALL OF US

EXCEPT FOR ME

I'M STAYING

SIMON THINKS IT *BEST* WE GO

IS THAT A FACT?

WE'VE GOT A NEW ESTABLISHMENT ALL READY AND WAITING

A SMALL HOTEL

NO MORE OF THE OLDEST PROFESSION

SNIP

TALKS CAM

U. PROFES

OUNDED

THEN I SHALL BE HAPPY FOR YOU ALL AS .ONG AS THE LOT OF YOU PROMISE TO VISIT ME IN THIS GREAT EMPTY HOUSE

OF COURSE, EMMA DEAR

WHY, YOU'LL ALWAYS BE ONE OF MY GIRLS

WUXTRY! WUXTRY!

MAD SHOOTER ON THE LOOSE!

AND WE GET TO KEEP *YOU?*

WHAT GOOD FORTUNE eh?

FOR *ONE* OF US

CLANK CLANK CLANK CLANK CLANK

DID YOU HEAR THAT?

HEAR *WHAT*, EMMA DEAR?

LIKE THE RATTLING OF IRON BARS

BUT *MUFFLED*

Oh, *THAT!*

YOU HEARD IT THEN?

OF COURSE!

THE MANSERVANTS MUST BE GETTING *RESTLESS*

MANSERVANTS?!

HOW LONG HAS THERE BEEN A SECRET PASSAGE *THERE?*

AND JUST WHAT PURPOSE DOES *THIS* HIDDEN CHAMBER SERVE?

SHALL I DRAW YOU A PICTURE, EMMA?

PLEASE LET US OUT!

WE'VE VERY SORRY FOR ALL THAT UNFORTUNATE BUSINESS WITH TRYING TO KILL YOU AND WHATNOT

VERY!

I BELIEVE AN *EXPLANATION* IS IN ORDER

WHAT'S TO KNOW?

MISTER LEPTON AND MISTER GRILLEN ARE BEING KEPT FOR *INTERROGATION*

SIMON, THIS IS BOTH *ILLEGAL* AND IMMORAL

AND WE ARE NOT THE *CONSTABULARY*

YOU CANNOT KEEP THESE MEN LOCKED AWAY IN SOME *DUNGEON* FOR DAYS ON END!

I CAN AND I *HAVE*

AND WHAT OF THE *THIRD* MAN?

HE WAS LEFT TO FEND FOR HIMSELF

NOK NOK NOK

RAINES, ARE YOU AN ABSOLUTE *NUTTER?*

IT'S TROUBLE ENOUGH THAT YOU BOTCHED MURDERING ARCHARD AND HIS PRETTY ASSISTANT

AND WHERE THE DEUCE ARE YOUR CLOTHES?

I... I CAN'T RIGHTLY SAY

I HAD AN UNFORTUNATE MISHAP WITH SOME *ETHER*

AND THERE WAS *ANOTHER* ATTACKER AT ARCHARD'S RESIDENCE

THE BOYS -- LEPTON AND GRILLEN -- I CAN ONLY ASSUME THAT THEY'VE BEEN

DARE I SAY IT

DISPATCHED

PERCY! WHO'S AT THE DOOR?

I MUST GO

GO?

BUT BUT BUT WHAT ABOUT ME?!

AT LEAST OFFER ME A WAISTCOAT AND A RUMPET

NOT THIS TIME, SIMON

YOU WILL NOT DISMISS MY CONCERNS WITH THAT INEVITABLE SCOWL AND A WAVE OF YOUR CANE

I DIDN'T REALIZE THAT THIS MATTER REQUIRED YOUR *CONSULTATION*

I HAVE *BETTER* THINGS TO DO THAN EXPLAIN MY EVERY MOTIVATION TO YOU, EMMA

HAVE YOU *EVER?*

YOU CERTAINLY DIDN'T ASK MY OPINION ON HAVING ALL THE AGENTS *VACATE* THE RESIDENCE

NOR THIS MATTER OF UNLAWFULLY DETAINING THOSE BUMBLING BUTLERS BELOW

THE SIMON ARCHARD OF RECENT MEMORY WAS WELL ON HIS WAY TO BECOMING COURTEOUS AND CHARITABLE PERHAPS EVEN A TRIFLE *CARING*

HAS IT ALL BEEN *PRETENSE?*

OPENING MY HOME TO THE AGENTS PLACED THEM IN DANGER'S WAY, EMMA

THAT'S A MISTAKE I WON'T MAKE AGAIN

AND YOU BLAME *THIS* FOR BEING OFF YOUR GAME OF LATE?

IF ANYTHING, I HAVE BEEN TOO OFTEN *DISTRACTED*

SERVING THE AGENTS RATHER THAN HAVING THEIR APTITUDES SERVE *ME*

YOU'RE SPEAKING OF OPHELIA

AND THE ALVA REMAR AFFAIR?

WAS I SERVING YOU IN PROVING YOUR INNOCENCE IN THE DEATH OF SELECTMAN STRATHMORE WHILE YOU RESTED THAT MIGHTY INTELLECT IN THE HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS?

THE FORMER HAS NO BEARING HERE

I SAW THE LATTER AS AMPLE OPPORTUNITY TO TEST YOUR OWN BURGEONING DEDUCTIVE SKILLS

I SEE

AND HOW DID I FARE?

I'LL LET YOU KNOW WHEN I'VE TABULATED YOUR FINAL GRADE

DING DONG

I SHOULD THINK THAT YOUR VERY FREEDOM MERITS A PASSING SCORE!

ANOTHER POST FOR YOU, MISTER ARCHARD

GIVEN ALL YOUR DELIVERIES OF LATE

SHRIP

I THOUGHT A SMALL *GRATUITY*

FOURTH NOTICE
Penalty For Keeping Unregistered Animal Specimens Within City Limits
25D
PLEASE PA
PROMPTL

ALRIGHT THEN

KRINK

BAD NEWS, WOT?

LET ME HAVE A LOOK AT THAT

WELL, WHAT DID YOU *EXPECT*, SIMON?

OPHELIA, GIVE THE MAN A PROPER PITTANCE FOR HIS TIME

SIMON, WAIT!

CHARLES, I WILL *NOT* SUFFER A PENALTY FOR ENGAGING IN ZOOLOGICAL STUDIES THAT BENEFIT *ALL* OF PARTINGTON

AND I *REFUSE* TO BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR A SPIDER HAVING BEHAVED AS SPIDERS DO!

JUST PAY THE FINE, SIMON

YOU SHOULD THANK YOUR LUCKY STARS FOR SO SMALL A TOLL DUE FOR STRATHMORE'S DEMISE

BESIDES, DEAN SOMMERSBY AND I HAVE MORE *PRESSING* CONCERNS

THE SNIPER

MAYOR BULLROND AND I WERE DISCUSSING HOW YOU MIGHT HELP

WHY, I COULD COUNT TOWARDS FINISHING YOUR DEGREE

YOUR PRESENCE ALONE MIGHT BE JUST THE THING TO MAKE FACULTY AND STUDENTS FEEL SAFE UNTIL THE BLIGHTER'S NABBED

=HMPH=

SIMON, HOW DARE YOU IGNORE ME THE WHOLE WAY -

OH BEG YOUR PARDON YOUR HONOR

EMMA!

ALLOW ME TO APOLOGIZE FOR INTRUDING

NOT AT ALL!

SIMON HAS JUST AGREED TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL!

DO TELL

ANNOUNCEMENT!

Master Detective SIMON ARCHARD
will lecture a mid-session course
on the theories and applied techniques of

ADVANCED CRIMINOLOGY

lasting THREE weeks beginning today.

Enrollment is limited to SEVEN students only

First session begins promptly at 9 A.M.
in RAVENSCROFT HALL, Room 107

WELL, HE *IS* AN ALUMNUS.

TEMPTING

AS IF YOUR COURSELOAD ISN'T ALREADY FULL TO BURSTING, BRYCE

I SHOULD THINK *YOU* WOULD BE FIRST TO REGISTER, JOHANNA

I ONLY JUST LEARNED OF IT!

WHAT AN *OPPORTUNITY!*

IS

IS ENROLLMENT TOPPED OFF?

BORROW MY PENCIL AND IT WILL BE

SIMON, IF YOU WON'T ENGAGE ME IN POLITE *CONVERSATION*, THE LEAST YOU COULD DO IS INFORM ME WHAT MY ROLE IS TO BE IN THIS INVESTIGATION

TEACHER'S ASSISTANT

I ASSUME THAT YOU'VE *PREPARED* PROPERLY

PREPARED WHAT?

YOUR LESSON PLAN

I HAVE SOMETHING *SPECIAL* IN MIND FOR THIS FIRST DAY

AN INTRODUCTORY TUTORIAL, AS IT WERE

AND WHAT AM I TO DO?

SHOP

SHOP?!

IT SHOULD TAKE YOU MOST OF THE MORNING

GOOD, SEVEN AND SEVEN ONLY

ALL OF YOU ASSEMBLE YOUR MATERIALS AND FOLLOW ME

Um, SHOULDN'T WE TAKE ROLL *FIRST*, MISTER ARCHARD?

OH, VERY WELL. INTRODUCE YOURSELVES AND BE QUICK ABOUT IT

YOU THERE IN THE PLAID CAP

JUD.

JUDSON LOCKE, SIR

SO THIS IS PUNISHMENT FOR SPEAKING MY MIND, eh, SIMON?

I SUPPOSE I AM TO BE MADE AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS WHO DEFY YOU

EASY PEASY

OBSERVE A *CRIME* IN THE OFFING

A VICTIM CHOSEN AT *RANDOM* SIR?

NO CRIME IS EVER RANDOM, MISTER GODFREY

THE PREDATOR CHOOSES HIS PREY OUT OF EASE

HE THINKS HER HELPLESS AND UNAWARES

OH!

WHACK

APPARENTLY, HE THINKS *WRONGLY*

T JUS AIN'T *FAIR*, LOOSH

'CHELLE WOULDN'T HURT *NOBODY*

SHE EVEN MADE ME FERGET HOW I FEEL ABOUT M'Z EMMA

THE RAT'S NEST

SORTA

=GLUG=

SSSSHE WASSSS KIND TO ME *ALSSSSO*, PETER

Y *YOU*, LOOSH?

AYUH

EVEN LOOKING ASSSS I *DO*

I'LL HELP YOU FIND THE *TELESSSTROUDIAN*

THEY'RE NOT *ALWAYSSS* INVSSSIBLE

HAVE YOU NOT BEEN *LISTENING* TO ME, SIMON?

I WAS NEARLY ROBBED PURCHASING THE ITEMS WHICH YOU HAVEN'T EVEN *OFFERED* TO HELP ME CARRY!

INDEED

YOU!

"QUICKFINGERS" *BILL* AT YOUR SERVICE, M'LADY

GOT ME RIGHT *GOOD* WITH THAT BROLLY, YE DID

HAVE TO CHARGE SIMON A TENNER *EXTRA* FOR THE SHINER

EXTRA?

WELL, THEN

SINCE SIMON IS PAYING--

--TAKE AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE!

EMMA IF IT'S ANY CONSOLATION

I BELIEVE YOUR PERFORMANCE *PROVED* MY POINT TO THE YOUNG CRIMINOLOGISTS

WHAT IF

WHAT IF THE CRIME *WERE* RANDOM?

IF NO ONE WAS TRULY HURT THEN WHY PURSUE IT FURTHER?

NO

NO

I'M SORRY

KRAK

HM?

SNIPER!

FLIPPIN' 'ECK, WHERE'S IT COMIN' FROM?

JUST SEEK COVER, LAD!

I WAS *THIS* CLOSE, ANGUS!

CLOSE TO WHAT POLLY?

THE *SNIPER*, JUD

HE'S STRUCK AGAIN!

YOU'D KNOW THAT IF YOU WEREN'T WORRYING SO ABOUT YOUR *AVERAGES*

BUT WHAT COULD BE *MORE* IMPORTANT?

I HEARD THAT POLLY MELTON NEARLY HAD HER HEAD TAKEN *OFF* BY THE SHOT

IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SOMEONE IS *KILLED*.

YOU *ASSUME*, MISS BULLFINCH, THAT THE SHOOTER WAS *AIMING* FOR THE YOUNG LADY'S HEAD.

NOW, IF YOU'LL TAKE YOUR SEATS, WE CAN BEGIN TODAY'S LESSON...

WILL YOU BE LECTURING ON THE *SNIPINGS*, PROFESSOR ARCHARD?

IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?

SIR?

YES, MISTER LOCKE

TELL US ABOUT *EVIL*.

THANKFULLY, I HAVE MATRICULATED FROM TEACHER'S AIDE TO ASSOCIATE SLEUTH ONCE MORE

TAP TAP

PROFESSOR WELLES?

W-W-WHO IS IT?

MISS EMMA BISHOP, PROFESSOR

I AM SIMON ARCHARD'S *PARTNER*.

WE ARE SOMEWHAT *CLANDESTINELY* INVESTIGATING THE SHOOTINGS THAT BEGAN WITH THE MAIMING OF YOUR HAND

I HAD HOPED YOU MIGHT ANSWER A FEW QUESTIONS.

YOU COULD BEGIN BY DESCRIBING YOUR ENEMIES

I I DON'T HAVE ANY

NOT EVEN A *DISGRUNTLED PUPIL?*

UH-LOOK AT MY GRADE-BOOK

I ONLY GIVE *PASSING* MARKS

THIS, STUDENTS, IS PERHAPS THE GREATEST CONCENTRATION OF *MALFEASANCE* IN ALL OF ARCADIA

BID WELCOME TO THE HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS AND ALL ITS DEVILISH DENIZENS.

YOU MIGHT HAVE READ ABOUT *LIONEL WOOSTER'S* SPATE OF HIJACKINGS AND ASSAULTS AT WOLFINGTON BRIDGE

PAY TOLL?

ANOTHER TIME, LIONEL

WELL, BOY

..LEARNING ANYTHING IMPORTANT?

I..

I'M FALLING BEHIND

THE HUNTING CLUB IS PURELY *EXTRACURRICULAR*, MISS BISHOP

AND OPERATES ONLY UNDER MY DIRECT SUPERVISION.

BUT AS PER YOUR REQUEST, I'VE ASSEMBLED A LIST OF THE STUDENTS IN MY CHARGE

IN MY EXPERIENCE THE YOUNG ARE NOT UNLIKE *MISFIRED* ROUNDS, MISS

YOU CAN SCARCELY TELL *WHERE* OR *WHEN* ONE MIGHT GO OFF

THE WHERE AND WHEN HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED

IT'S THE WHY THAT ELUDES US

THOUGH I AM *LOATHE* TO SPEAK TO YOU AT PRESENT--

--I CAN REPORT THAT THERE APPEARS TO BE NO APPARENT MOTIVE OR CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO SNIPINGS THUS FAR

DO YOU BELIEVE THESE TO BE *RANDOM* ACTS OF VIOLENCE?

NOT BY *YOUR* DEFINITION

THEN KEEP DIGGING

LOOK FOR DEVIATIONS FROM THE NORM

WHILE YOU CONTINUE TO ENGAGE IN FIELD TRIPS?

MY *DIRECT* INVESTIGATION MIGHT MAKE THE CULPRIT GO DEEPER INTO HIDING--

OR HAVE THE ENTIRELY *OPPOSITE* EFFECT OF *ENCOURAGING* HIM. OR HER TO CONTINUE SNIPING

SIMON, THE MANSERVANTS ARE ASKING FOR YOU

OF COURSE THEY ARE

SEEK ME OUT WHEN YOU KNOW SOMETHING *DEFINITIVE*, EMMA.

OH, I MOST CERTAINLY WILL

PROFESSOR WELLES SPOKE TRULY

HIS STUDENTS PASS WITH HIGH MARKS, NEARLY ALL IMPROVING THEIR GRADES WITH EACH EXAMINATION

NEARLY ALL

AS I'VE DEMONSTRATED, THE DISTINCTIVE WHORLS IN A TELLTALE FINGERPRINT CAN PROVIDE *INVALUABLE* EVIDENCE IF--

PROFESSOR ARCHARD, WOULD YOU ALLOW ME TO RETURN US TO THE TOPIC OF *RANDOMNESS* IN CRIME

ONLY FOR THE TIME IT TAKES ME TO WASH THE BLACKBOARD, MISTER LOCKE

CONSIDER

CONSIDER THE SNIPER

AND THIS NOTATION

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

REGISTRAR

JUDSON LOCKE IS HERE ON *FULL SCHOLARSHIP*, MISS BISHOP

MUST MAINTAIN HIGHEST STANDARD OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

THAT YOUNG MAN PASSING SHARES LOCKE'S DORMITORY ROOM

ANGUS!

WE'D LIKE TO ASK YOU ABOUT JUD LOCKE

Oh, *THAT* ONE!

STUDY, STUDY, STUDY

HE'LL VERY WELL KILL HIMSELF WITH WORK AND WORRY

COULD I SEE LOCKE'S CURRENT SCHEDULE?

CERTAINLY

THERE HE IS

AUDITING MISTER ARCHARD'S CLASS, AS WE SPEAK.

OF COURSE

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

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PROFESSOR WELLES SUFFERED A FLESH WOUND ONLY

AND THE SECOND VICTIM WAS MISSED BY A FOOT, AT LEAST

GO ON

IF ANYTHING, THE SNIPER'S *COMPLETELY* RANDOM

HE COULD BE TAKING POTSHOTS WILLY-NILLY, FIRING RANDOMLY WITHOUT REAL INTENT TO HURT

CERTAINLY NOT TO *KILL*

WHY, HE'S PROBABLY LOSING INTEREST

HE COULD BE TRULY FINISHED WITH THE SNIPINGS

ARE *YOU* TRULY FINISHED WITH THE SNIPINGS, MISTER LOCKE?

I DON'T KNOW

=GASP=

JUD, DON'T!

STAY BACK!

I'LL SHOOT, I SWEAR!

I'M TOO LATE

PERHAPS BEFORE THAT YOU MIGHT TELL THE CLASS *WHY* YOU DID WHAT YOU DID MISTER LOCKE

HAVE CARE, SIMON

TELL THEM WHY IT *WASN'T* RANDOM

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I WAS ANGRY AT PROFESSOR WELLES

THAT GRADE WAS SO *DAMAGING*

I I ONLY SHOT AT POLLY TO MAKE IT APPEAR RANDOM

I'VE NOTHING AGAINST HER

I IT'S NO SECRET I'M QUITE FOND OF HER

IF SHE DIDN'T GO WITH ANGUS, I'D

I'D

CRIME IS NEVER RANDOM, MISTER LOCKE

AND NEITHER IS REDEMPTION

ONE *CHOOSES* TO DO EVIL. JUST AS ONE CHOOSES TO REPENT AND FACE THE CONSEQUENCES OF ONE'S ACTS

MY LIFE IS RUINED

IF YOU *TRULY* BELIEVE THAT, THEN PULL THE TRIGGER

MY POWER

I COULD STOP THE BULLET

I

CLASS IS D.SM.SSED

I DON'T BELIEVE IT

BUT I'M PROUD OF YOU NONE-THELESS, SIMON
APPARENTLY, WE KEYED ON THE SNIPER'S IDENTITY ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY
OR DID YOU SUSPECT LOCKE SOONER AND SIMPLY NOT TELL ME?
I THINK HE WANTED TO BE FOUND OUT.
HE TRIED SO HARD TO PROVE THAT CRIME COULD BE RANDOM, PERHAPS TO SUBVERT HIS OWN GUILT
SNIPER STRIKES AGAIN!
ANOTHER POST, SIMON!
I INSIST YOU CEASE ANSWERING THE DOOR, OPHELIA
MORE WORTHLESS PAPER
THOUGH YOU'VE YET TO REVEAL MY FINAL MARK, I WOULD CERTAINLY AWARD YOU AN "A" FOR SUCCESS IN ENDING THE SNIPINGS WITHOUT BLOODSHED
EMMA, DESPITE WHAT I STATED EARLIER--
--I CARE VERY LITTLE FOR GRADES
OBVIOUSLY
AND EVEN LESS FOR THE CITY'S FINES
BUT THIS
THIS YOU DESERVE, SIMON
PARTINGTON UNIVERSITY
HEREBY CONFERS UPON
Simon Archard
THE HONORARY DEGREE
DISTINGUISHED FELLOW AND SCHOLAR
MASTER OF CRIMINOLOGY
WITH ALL THE HONORS AND DISTINCTIONS BELONGING TO THIS DEGREE
IN CONSIDERATION OF HIS DISTINGUISHED CONTRIBUTIONS
TO THIS POLYTECHNIC AND THE WHOLE OF PARTINGTON.
Given on this day, the seventeenth day of Ho
eighteen thousand nine hundred and nine

In Acknowledgement of The Fine Administration & Craftsmen at CrossGeneration Comics, Incorporated

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The PENNY ARCADIAN

Copiously Illustrated — Afternoon Edition, Price One Penny

SNIPING STUDENT SURRENDERS!

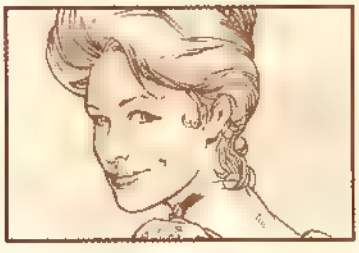
OUR PLAYERS

SIMON ARCHARD

PARTINGTON'S FAVORITE SON
HIS MIND IS RAZOR-SHARP

EMMA BISHOP

A FETCHING BEAUTY,
HER SPIRIT CRAVES ADVENTURE



THE ENIGMATIC PRISM

A TERRIBLE TALISMAN
LIKE A BAD PENNY TURNING UP!

PARTINGTON UNIVERSITY CREDITS ARCHARD

Faculty and students of Partington University may now breathe easy following the capture of a sinister sniper who had terrorized the campus grounds in recent days with a spate of shootings from on high.

However, both academicians and members of the student body were shocked to learn that the shooter was none other than one of their very own, young Judson Locke, an honors student attending the polytechnic on scholarship. Partington's favorite son, master detective Simon Archard, and his assistant, Miss Emma Bishop, revealed Locke's complicity in the snipings, initially believed to be random acts of violence. Thankfully, only one of which resulted in human injury.

Locke is presently detained by the Partington Constabulary pending trial on charges including the intentional wounding of Hubert Welles, Professor of Philosophy, as well as terroristic assault upon the public. Welles suffered a minor gunshot through the palm of one hand. Whether or not charges of attempted murder will be filed remains to be determined, especially considering that Archard himself has offered personal testimony of his belief that Locke intended no real harm, but had instead succumbed to the pressures of academic pursuits and lashed out at Welles after receiving a below-par mark from the professor.

As reported to *The Arcadian*, at the behest of Mayor Charles Bullrond and P.U. Dean Warren Somersby, Archard and Bishop were called upon to investigate the shootings under cover of Archard's clandestine agreement to conduct a mid-semester lecture series on theories and applications of criminology. Archard himself theorized that the sniper would attend his class in an attempt to determine whether or not the master detective was, in fact, seeking him out.

While no further shootings took place during Archard's tenure as guest lecturer, a contrite Locke — no doubt dogged by guilt and anxiety - admitted his role as sniper within the detective's classroom, thus confirming Archard's suspicions. Locke subsequently surrendered to Archard and his assistant without incident.

ADMITTED SNIPER JUDSON LOCKE CONFESSES HIS CRIMES

Archard, who matriculated but had never completed his own course of study at the University, was honored for his efforts in resolving the snipings with receipt of an honorary degree ---PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

SNATCHER SNAGGED!

Police Commissioner Theo. Morton commends detective Iain Crombie and his assistant Charity Wyndham for their work in capturing pickpocket and purse-snatcher William Morrisey, also known by the alias "Quickfingers Bill." Morrisey is alleged to be the culprit behind a rash of pilferings having occurred in the Market Street shopping district ---PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

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WHERE IS IT?
LEAVE ME BE
WHAT WILL PEOPLE *THINK*, EMMA?
THEY'LL THINK WHAT THEY *LIKE*, SIMON
BESIDES, IT'S ALMOST *EXPECTED*
WE'RE QUITE ALONE NOW
YOU SAW TO *THAT* WHEN YOU HAD ALL YOUR LOYAL AGENTS VACATE THE RESIDENCE
THEY WERE IN DANGER FROM EVENTS I CANNOT CONTROL
AS ARE *YOU*

GO BACK TO BED.
LOCK YOUR DOOR BEHIND YOU
DO IT NOW BEFORE SOMETHING *REGRETTABLE* HAPPENS
FIRST, TELL ME ONE THING
WHERE IS IT?
EMMA, I
EN GARDE, SIMON
RELEASE THOSE PENT-UP EM--
--Mmmm
EMMA, I NEVER DREAMED
DREAMED *WHAT*, SIMON?
THAK!
=UHN!=
THAT YOU COULD BE SO TREACHEROUS!
DAMN YOU AND YOUR DAMNABLE PRISM
FACE ME, HARRIDAN
SHOW ME YOUR *EYES.*
AREN'T THEY PRETTY, SIMON?
BUT MERE *REFLECTIONS* OF THE TRUE PRIZE
WHERE IS IT?
WHERE IS IT?
I
WHERE IS IT?
WHERE IS IT?
I DON'T HAVE IT!
THEY DON'T BELIEVE YOU
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU
WHERE IS IT?
I DON'T KNOW!
DAMN YOU, MALCOLM

STATE YOUR BUSINESS
TRENCHER
INSPECTOR THOMAS TRENCHER
I'M HERE TO SEE SIMON ARCHARD
TELL HIM THAT HE AND I SHOULD SPEAK SOMEWHERE MORE PRIVATE THAN THE STOOP
VERY WELL
TWO SUGARS AND A SMALL DOLLOP OF HEAVY CREAM, INSPECTOR TRENCHER
YOU *REMEMBERED*
MY MEMORY IS NEARLY *PHOTOGRAPHIC*
SURELY YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN THAT, *TOM*
NO.
BUT THEN I WONDER IF YOU'VE MANAGED TO BETTER RECALL THE EVENTS THAT FIRST LED OUR PATHS TO CROSS
LIGHTBOURNE
YOUR *FIRST* PARTNER
THE ONE WHO RAN YOU THROUGH AND LEFT YOU FOR DEAD YEARS AGO
AND THEN PLUNGED TO A FIERY END *HIMSELF*
TO THE BEST OF MY RECOLLECTION, YES THAT *WAS* THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS
BUT WE KNOW NOW THAT LIGHTBOURNE DID NOT PERISH THEN
QUIETLY, EMMA
KREAK
APPARENTLY *NOT*
THE BLIGHTER GOT US ALL GOOD WITH THAT UNDERMINING BUSINESS SHAKING PARTINGTON TO PIECES
BEG PARDON, MISTER ARCHARD
AHA!
WHAT DID LIGHTBOURNE CALL IT .THAT *WIDGET* HE WANTED SO DESPERATELY?
THE CURIOUS CURIO?
THE MYSTERIOUS MONOCLE?
THE ENIGMATIC PRISM
THAT'S IT!

A GEM SO RARE MEN WOULD KILL, OR DIE THEMSELVES, TO HAVE IT

MORE LIKELY CHEAP CARNIVAL GLASS OF LITTLE OR NO VALUE

IN MY NOTEBOOK, I'VE A ROUGH *APPROXIMATION* OF WHAT AN ENIGMATIC PRISM MIGHT LOOK LIKE

YOU SKETCHED IT WITH YOUR OWN HAND DURING ONE OF THE MORE LUCID MOMENTS AFTER MISTER LIGHTBOURNE TRIED TO GUT YOU

IT BEARS AN UNCANNY *SIMILARITY* TO A STONE THAT'S PASSED THROUGH MORE THAN A FEW HANDS IN RECENT DAYS

PAWN BR
ROBBE

", BEGINNING AT A LOCAL CHAPEL OF THE EPIPHANIC CHURCH"

GLAD TIDINGS TO YOU, MY SON

AND NARY A *SLUG* IN THE COLLECTION--

--BLESSED LIGHT, WHAT'S *THIS*?

"AND SO IT WENT FROM FRIAR TO JEWELER."

Pryce's
GEMOLOGY & SILVERSMITHING

IS IT VALUABLE?

IT'S DIFFICULT TO SAY

THE CUT AND CLARITY CERTAINLY *SMACK* OF VALUE

HOW DOES A HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE *STRIKE* YOU, FRIAR?

Pryce

I SUPPOSE

WELL THEN, LITTLE PRETTY

WHAT ARE YOU? FLAWLESS DIAMOND?

OR DOES YOUR BLUE LUSTER MAKE YOU THE PALEST SAPPHIRE?

DO YOU *SCRATCH*, LITTLE PRETTY?

"THE SCALE OF MINERAL HARDNESS CLIMBS FROM ONE TO TEN, MISTER ARCHARD DIAMOND RANKING HIGHEST AFTER CORUNDUM

", WHICH SOUNDS A BIT LIKE '*CONUNDRUM*,' WOULDN'T YOU SAY?"

"AND *APPROPRIATE*, CONSIDERING THAT SCRATCHING DID LITTLE TO MAR THE CRYSTAL . BUT LEFT IT SPARKING A STRANGE BLUE FIRE, IF THE JEWELER'S TESTIMONY IS TO BE *BELIEVED*"

OH.

OH!
CHEE?
CHEE.
CHEEEEEEEE!
WELL
THAT WAS MOST UNPLEASANT
ANTAEUS, ATTEND ME
ANTAEUS!
ATTEND ME!
GRUH?
HE DOESN'T HAVE IT
SIMPLE SIMON HAS LET THE KEY SLIP HIS GRASP
EVEN NOW ITS ENERGIES ARE BEING REPLENISHED.
GROO?
DON'T EVER LEAVE ME WAITING AGAIN, ANTAEUS.
YOU ARE NOT IRREPLACEABLE
MAKE TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS
WE'RE GOING TO PARTINGTON
AND WE'RE GOING TO FETCH THE KEY BACK BEFORE THOSE FOOLS LET SOMETHING OUT

BALTHUS!

WHAT HAVE I TOLD YOU ABOUT LEAVING THE LEDGER UPON THE COUNTER FOR ALL TO SEE?

A HUNDRED AND TWENTY

--BALTHUS!

JUST *WHAT* COULD YOU HAVE POSSIBLY PURCHASED FROM FRIAR FARLEY FOR A HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE?

WHY *THIS*, DEAREST BERTHA?

FLAWLESS! UTTERLY FLAWLESS!

THIS GAUDY COSTUME BAUBLE?

IT'S *NOT!*

FWAP

NOW GIVE IT BACK, YOU BLEEDING HARPY!

HARPY?!

Oh, BERTHA I

I'M SO DREADFULLY AWFULLY HORRIBLY SORRY

I DON'T KNOW WHAT CAME OVER ME

WHEN I FIRST SAW THE STONE I

I JUST HAD TO *HAVE* IT

NOT *ANYMORE*, YOU DON'T

WHATEVER I CAN GET FOR IT WILL LINE MY *OWN* PURSE, BALTHUS PRYCE

MARK MY WORDS

WELL, LOOK WHO IT IS, ALL *ROSE-CHEEKED!*

PAWN

SPARE ME YOUR *DROLL* WIT, MISTER GRUDD

GOT ANOTHER BIT OF CAST OFF FAKERY TO PASS ALONG, WOT?

I'LL BE SELLING *AND* BUYING TODAY, MISTER GRUDD

SELLING *WHAT*, MADAME PRYCE?

THIS

SO PRETTY

AND .

AND WHAT SHALL YOU BE *BUYING* THEN?

ONE SIDE!

SAYS YOU, MUM

CURIOUS AND MORE CURIOUS STILL...

AND WHERE'S THE *CRIME*, INSPECTOR TRENCHER?

SO THE *OBJECT* IN QUESTION WAS BOUGHT AND SOLD MORE THAN ONCE IN THE SAME DAY

I SHOULD TELL YOU THAT THE PAWNBROKER WAS HIMSELF *ROBBED* OF THE GEM SOME TIME AFTER BY A WELL-KNOWN ROUGHNECK

IT MAY BE A BIT OF A LEAP

...BUT DOESN'T THIS ALL SOUND A BIT LIKE THE *OBJECT* OF MISTER LIGHTBOURNE'S OBSESSION?

PERHAPS IF THE ENIGMATIC PRISM EVER EXISTED TO START

EVER EXISTED, SIMON?

IT'S A WILD GOOSE CHASE, INSPECTOR TRENCHER

AND CERTAINLY NOT WORTH *ENDING* YOUR WELL-EARNED RETIREMENT BY JOINING THE PURSUIT

THE LINGERING CASES DO HAVE A WAY OF *HAUNTING* YOUR IDLE THOUGHTS.

AND YOU MAY AS WELL FORGET THOSE TEDIOUS HOBBIES TO WHICH YOU PLEDGED TO DEVOTE YOUR ATTENTIONS

BUT YOU'LL FIND THAT YOURSELF IN TIME, SIMON

SHOW ME THE DOOR?

WAS THERE TRUTH TO YOUR CAUTIONARY TALE, SIMON?

DID YOU CONFIRM IT BY REVEALING THE HIDDEN PANEL IN THE MANTLEPIECE?

THE CONCEALED VAULT WHERE YOU SECRETE THE VERY THING YOU SAY DOES NOT~

~EXIST

YOU SAID IT WAS SAFE, SIMON!

WELL?

DEFEND YOURSELF

EMMA, I APPEAR TO HAVE LOST IT

LOST IT?

BRAVO, SIMON

WELL PLAYED

THE INVISIBLE MAN

AND SO THE GREAT AND TERRIBLE ENIGMATIC PRISM WE ONCE RISKED OUR LIVES TO SAFEGUARD IS NOW LIKELY IN THE CLUTCHES OF SOME DESPICABLE VILLAIN

BIG BAD DONEGAL!

WHY DONCHA BUY YER MATES A ROUND OR THREE WIT' ALL THAT ILL-GOTTEN SWAG?

CUZ I GOT *BETTER* THINGS TO DO WITH MY SWAG, BOYO

TH S ONE'S BARKIN FOR A MOUTHFUL OF DONNY'S FIST LADS

AYE, HE IS, TO BE SURE

GOT BIG PLANS FOR TONIGHT, BIG BAD DONEGAL?

GONNA BUY MESELF A PINT

AND THEN I'LL LIKELY FIND MESELF SOME *TROUBLE*

YOU COMIN' THEN, *TROUBLE*?

DONNY'S ASKIN' FOR MORE THAN TROUBLE WITH THAT ONE F M STER WALLACE EVER CATCHES ON

Mmmm

DID YOU BRING ME SOMETHING *PRETTY*, DONNY?

I DIDS

Oh, DONNY

SO NOW I'VE GONE AND PAID FOR THE *FERRY*

WHERE'S THE *RIDE*?

DONNY

AM I *REALLY* TROUBLE?

CAN'T YOU SEE I'M *CLOSED*, SIR AND MISS?

KLOP KLOP KLOP KLOP KLOP KLOP

PAWN

JUST LOOK AT THE STATE OF MY HUMBLE SHOP!

T APPEARS THAT YOU'VE HAD A BIT OF A *ROW*, MISTER GRUPP

TH EF BOXED MY EYE

AND SLICED OFF *HALF* MY MOUSTACHIO, MISS

YOU TOLD THE INSPECTOR THAT ONLY A RECENTLY PURCHASED GEMSTONE WAS *PILFERED*

DID THE THIEF ALSO SMASH THE GLASS AND MAKE OFF WITH A PISTOL FROM THIS D SPLAY?

Y-YES

HE SURELY *DID!*

HE'S LYING

THERE WAS NO THIEF

BUT BUT THERE WAS!

NO.

THERE WASN'T

NOW TELL US WHAT REALLY TRANSPIRED--

--OR I'LL YANK OFF THE *OTHER* HALF

TING-A-LING

AFTERNOON, GRUPPY

HOW'S BIZNESS BOYO?

SOLD ANY SECOND-HAND JUNK TODAY?
DONEGAL, PLEASE, NO!
HOW AM I EXPECTED TO PAY UP IF YOU SMASH MY STOCK TO SPLINTERS?
T-T-TAKE *THIS*
IT'S ALL I'VE GOT FOR THE WEEK
NOT *NEARLY* ENOUGH, GRUPPY
YOU KNOW THE *RULE*
IF YA CAN'T PAYS YOUR POUNDS BACK IN *FULL*~
~YOU GOTS TO PAYS A POUND OF FLESH IN *INTEREST*
PLEASE, NOOOO!
"DONEGAL LOPPED OFF MY MUZZY AND TOOK THE PRETTY STONE FOR GOOD MEASURE
"THE *PISTOL* I SOLD TO MRS. PRYCE THE JEWELER'S WIFE, RIGHT BEFORE DONEGAL BUSTED UP MY SHOP"
PAWN
OVER GAMBLING DEBTS?
AND WHERE CAN WE FIND YOUR *DEBTOR*, MISTER GRUPP?
IF
IF I TELL YOU
WILL YOU BRING THE PRETTY STONE *BACK* TO ME?
TOO BIG FOR A *RING*
BUT WHAT A PRETTY *BROOCH* YOU'D MAKE!
DO YOU FANCY *THAT*, DONNY?
DONNY?
DON'T MIND IF I SKINNY OFF THEN WHILE YOU *SLEEP*?
WELL, LOOKIT THAT FINE YOUNG THING!
WHAT IT COST ME TO SAMPLE *YOUR* WARES, SALLY?
MORE THAN YOU'LL *EVER*
MORE THAN YOU'VE *GOT*
MIND YOUR LABORS, GENTS
THAT'S WALLY'S GIRL
AND WALLY'S *ONLY*
LUCKY SOD
ABOUT BLOODY TIME!
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN KEEPING YOURSELF, SALLY?
NOWHERE, WALLY
JUST OUT AND ABOUT MAKING MYSELF *PRETTY* FOR YOU
OWW
YOU'RE HURTING ME
AM I, SALLY?
I'VE GOT A FEELING YOU'VE BEEN HOLDING OUT ON ME
IN MORE WAYS THAN *ONE*

YOU CAN UNDERSTAND MY *DILEMMA*

I THOUGHT IT BEST TO *SELL* THE STONE.

FOR THE CHURCH COFFERS, YOU SEE

I HAD NO IDEA IT WAS SO VERY *UNIQUE*

DO YOU THINK I MIGHT *REACQUIRE* THE PRETTY STONE, INSPECTOR TRENCHER?

WHERE IS IT?

WHAT WAS THAT?

WHERE DID YOU HIDE THE PRETTY JEWEL?!

I MUST HAVE LOST IT HERE!

STOP THIS RUCKUS, MAN!

I SAID *STOP!*

KLUD

OOF!

I. I SHOULD HAVE NEVER TAKEN IT FROM HIM

FROM *WHOM?*

ARCHARD!

THI

HANG

MAN

THAT'S CORRECT

I'M LOOKING FOR THE ONE CALLED *DONEGAL*

KRI-KRIK

AND I'M WILLING TO *PAY* FOR INFORMATION CONCERNING HIS WHEREABOUTS

ANY TAKERS?

HOW *MUCH* ARE YA WILLIN TA PAY, LUV?

WHAT *NOW?*

I'VE ALREADY TOLD ARCHARD EVERY-THING!

HE WENT AFTER DONEGAL

JOHN WALLACE'S TOUGH?

THAT'S HIM ALRIGHT

THE OLD COPPER

HE MUST *KNOW*

WE'LL FOLLOW HIM AND FIND THE STONE *TOGETHER*

BUT ONLY IF YOU PROMISE TO *SHARE*

JUST LET ME HOLD IT A LITTLE WHILE

WAIT OUTSIDE, EMMA

I'LL DO NOTHING OF THE SORT

WE ARE *UNITED* IN THIS QUEST, SIMON

SURELY YOU CAN SEE THAT THE PATTERN OF VIOLENCE APPEARS TO BE *ESCALATING*

WHERE'S THE *GIRL*, DONEGAL?

SALLY

PRO'LY GONE TO SEES *HIM*

HER OTHER FELLA

BOSS WALLY

THERE, BERTHA

THE DETECTIVES WHO QUESTIONED ME

THEY MUST KNOW WHERE IT IS

WALLY, NO!
IT'S MINE!
BLAM
COLD-BLOODED MONSTER!
KRAK
-GUNF-
I CAME AS FAST AS THESE OLD LEGS WOULD CARRY ME, LASS. BUT YOU'RE NOT THE FIRST TO DIE FOR THIS SHINY WIDGET.
DON'T TOUCH IT!
SIMON!
IT'S THE ENIGMATIC PRISM, TOM.
IT'S EVIL.
I HAVEN'T THE TIME TO EXPLAIN *HOW* OR *WHY*
WELL, *FIND* THE TIME!
I'LL SECURE THE PRISM, SIMON
EMMA
I'M JUST GOING TO TUCK IT IN MY--
OH!
-UNK-
ARE YOU *HURT?!*
STARTLED, INSPECTOR TRENCHER
THE PRISM BURNS WITH COLD BLUE FIRE
WHERE IS IT?
WHERE?
GIVES IT TO ME.
NO, ME
ME IT'S MINE.
WHERE IS IT?!
THEIR EYES!
THE LOT OF THEM ARE BLOTTO!
EMMA, TO THE WINDOW!
THEY'RE AFTER THE PRISM!
HURRY NOW!
BUT THE INSPECTOR!
JUST *GO,* MISS!
TAKE THAT WICKED WIDGET FAR AWAY FROM HERE!
WHERE IS IT?!
PROMISE ME!
NOT SIMON!
YOU!
WHERE IS IT?!
ON MY LIFE, INSPECTOR TRENCHER
I SWEAR!
THEN *RUN!*
WHERE IS IT?!
BLAM BLAM
DON'T LOOK BACK, EMMA.
TOM CAN HANDLE HIMSELF!

EMMA!
I TOLD YOU TO PACK ONLY ESSENTIALS!
AND I DID, SIMON
AM I TO ASSUME THAT THE PRISM IS SOMEWHERE WITHIN THE RECESSES OF THAT BLOATED TRUNK?
MAKE-UP CASE
AND YES, I HAVE IT
THAT'S ALL YOU NEED KNOW
VERY WELL
THEN YOU CAN HOIST THE BURDEN OF IT ONTO THE CARRIAGE YOURSELF
S.A
OH I NTEND TO
EMMA!
A VERY DASHING GENT LEFT THIS PARCEL FOR YOU
WHAT GENTLEMAN?
A MISTER DARE
LISTEN VERY CAREFULLY TO ME, OPHELIA
BOLT THE DOOR BEHIND US AND DON'T LET ANYONE IN!

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THE AFFAIR OF THE ENIGMATIC PRISM

Chapter Four: Death in Balzacia

By all accounts, the bankers and businessmen of Balzacia never conducted commerce on the last day of the working week, choosing instead to convene en masse at local lodge halls to smoke fine cigars while trading in secrets and lies.

For this very reason, Theophilus Dare knew that solicitor Caspar Caitiff, esq., would not be present at his office as Arcadia's Favored Scion, and his assistants—the bookish Simon Archard, timid to a fault and troubled by a persistent limp, and comely Emma Bishop, whose ear for languages proved her usefulness on more than one occasion—chose not to knock upon Caitiff's door.

"But doesn't this show us to be no better than common thieves?" protested Simon as Dare knelt before the keyhole and, fetching a pin from his cravat, picked the lock with a finesse that made Emma blush with admiration.

"Oh, Theo—were it not for your renown as the world's most daring detective, you most certainly could excel at criminal skullduggery!" said Emma as the bolt slid free and Caitiff's door opened as if by magic.

Theophilus Dare merely smiled as he replaced the pin to his cravat and entered the solicitor's sanctum.

"Perhaps my staggering grasp of the malcontent mind comes from experience firsthand," said Dare as he took a magnifying glass from inside his plaid topcoat and began to examine Caitiff's belongings in scrupulous detail.

Simon and Emma followed suit, the former reading over the scrawled scribblings in his notebook, while the naïve Miss Bishop made the great mistake of looking in Caitiff's closet for clues to the whereabouts of the dreaded Enigmatic Prism, a gemstone men would—and had—killed for or died to possess.

"Do you truly believe Caitiff has found the Prism?" said Simon.

"Caitiff boasted of holding the map, and by conjecture, one should likely assume that he has used it to uncover that cursed jewel," said Dare.

"Wouldn't you agree with my postulation, Miss Bishop?" he continued, but heard no reply from Emma, who could utter no response—nor even breathe easily—with Caspar Caitiff, who had hidden himself away in the aforementioned closet, gripping her tightly 'round the neck.

What's more, Caitiff brandished what could no doubt be the Enigmatic Prism, grasped in such a manner as to do Miss Bishop considerable harm unless Dare's Detectives heeded his demands...

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HANDS HIGH, DETECTIVES!
OR I SWEAR I'LL REFRACT YOUR PRETTY GIRL FRIDAY INTO VERY SMALL BITS!
WE'D BETTER DO AS HE SAYS, THEOPHILUS
CASPAR CAITIFF IS QUITE MAD
OH, THEO!
WHAT SHALL I DO?
GO RIGHT AHEAD, CAITIFF
REFRACT AWAY
THEO, DON'T GOAD HIM ON!
HOW WOULD WE REPLACE EMMA?

I'VE TRAVELED FAR AND WIDE TO SECURE THE *ENIGMATIC PRISM*, THEOPHILUS DARE

I'M NOT ABOUT TO GIVE IT UP NOW!

THEO, *PLEASE*

I'M AS FRIGHTENED AS FRIGHTENED CAN BE!

YOU'VE *NOTHING* TO FRET, MISS BISHOP

THAT'S NOT THE *REAL* PRISM AT ALL

AND HARDLY WORTH A *PENNY*, AT THAT

YOU SPIN QUITE A *TALE*, MISTER DARE

YOU SHOULD PEN *NOVELS*

SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT I'M MORE *ENLIGHTENED* THAN YOU ON SUCH MATTERS, SCOUNDREL

UNHAND ZAT GIRL, MONSIEUR CAITIFF!

INSPECTOR MONDIEU!

OUI, ZAT IS ME

HAVE YOU A PLAN, THEO?

FOCUS, SIMON

WE MUST *FOCUS*

SNIFF

WHAT'S THAT *DREADFUL*

I'M AFLAME!

ONE SIDE, MISS BISHOP!

FASH

TAKE ZAT!

KAPOW

GUR!

I

OHHHH

I'M DONE FOR

I BID YOU FAREWELL, DARE A WORTHY OPPONENT IF EVER WAS ONE. AND I'VE FACED MORE THAN A FEW IN MY WASTED MISBEGOTTEN YEARS OF CALUMNY AND GUILE

TINK

SIMON, ATTEND TO MISS BISHOP

THE THREAT OF REFRACTION BY THE PRISM HAS LEFT HER HEART *AFLUTTER*

OHHHH

YOU CAN STOP BATTING YOUR EYELASHES NOW

THEO'S BRILLIANT DEDUCTIVE MIND IS ELSEWHERE

DRAT

LE MORT. *FEH.*

AND ZE *PREEZEM*, M'SIEUR DARE?

JUST AS I THOUGHT.

PASTE

AND A RARE GLUE AT THAT

BUT ZE *REAL* PREEZEM?

WE MAY NEVER KNOW, INSPECTOR MONDIEU

YOU SEE CASPAR CAITIFF WOULD HAVE ATTEMPTED TO SELL THIS *COUNTERFEIT* GEMSTONE TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER—

—A *RUSE* TO FINANCE HIS EXPEDITION IN PURSUIT OF THE TRUE ENIGMATIC PRISM

THUS, IF HE HAD NOT DIED SO *SUDDENLY* JUST NOW WE MIGHT HAVE INSTEAD LEARNED THE LOCATION OF CAITIFF'S HIDDEN MAP

THE CRUX OF THE MATTER NOW IS THAT NO ONE WILL BE ABLE TO FIND THE PRISM

NOT EVEN *YOUR* GOVERNMENT, INSPECTOR

ENOUGH OF *ZEES!*

I EXPECT ZE LOT OF YOU OUT OF MY CITY BEFORE ZE NIGHTFALL!

EZPECIALLY *YOU,* MONSIEUR THEOPHILUS PARE DETECTIVE SAVANT!

GOOD DAY TO YOU, EMIL

AND YOU BUT OF COURSE

THANK HEAVENS THE GENDARME IS GONE THEO

I THINK CAITIFF MIGHT YET LIVE!

OF COURSE HE *LIVES,* SIMON

INSPECTOR MONDIEU HAS A LAZY EYE

THEREFORE, HIS SHOTS ALWAYS PULL TO THE *LEFT*

THE *MAP,* CAITIFF

TELL ME WHERE IT IS AND I'LL HAVE MY ASSISTANT STAUNCH YOUR BLEEDING WITH HIS EXPENSIVE SILK CRAVAT

NEVER

THE VEIL HAS BEEN LIFTED

AND YOU'LL NEVER FIND IT

NEVER, I SAY!

≥BLURGLE!≤

DEFIANT TO THE BITTER END

WELL, I SUPPOSE THAT'S THAT

IS IT, SIMON?

YOU DON'T SUPPOSE CAITIFF'S LAST WORDS COULD BE A *CLUE* OF SOME SORT, THEO?

MOST *ASSUREDLY,* MISS BISHOP

THE FINAL EXHALATIONS OF A DYING VILLAIN ARE NEARLY *ALWAYS* CLUES, MY INTREPID GIRL FRIDAY...

"*THE VEIL HAS BEEN LIFTED*"

WHAT COULD HE MEAN?

I SHOULD THANK YOU FOR SAVING MY LIFE, THEO

YES, OF COURSE

THE VEIL

WITH

MY MOST

PROFOJND

GRATITUDE

GADZOOKS, THAT'S IT!

YOUR WINKING *EYELIDS,* EMMA

NOT UNLIKE THE SHADES OF WINDOWS DRAWN AND OPENED!

WHATEVER DO YOU *MEAN,* THEO?

THE VEIL HAS BEEN LIFTED UNTIL *NOW!*

CAITIFF'S MAP!

YOU'VE DONE IT THEO!

WITH IT, WE CAN FIND THE ENIGMATIC PRISM AND END THIS SORDID AFFAIR!

IF ONLY IT WERE SO *EASY*, SIMON

CAITIFF'S MAP TRACES THE LOCATIONS OF *THREE* ENIGMATIC PRISMS

TWO ARE SURELY *DODGES* TO MISDIRECT US FROM THE AUTHENTIC STONE

EACH PATH HAS SUCH *PERILS*, THEO

WHERE WOULD WE BEGIN?

WELL, MY INTREPID ASSISTANTS

..THE SUN HAS BROUGHT US GOOD FORTUNE SO FAR

And so Arcadia's Favored Scion made good his promise to Inspector Mondieu and departed the city of Balzacia, but not before Caspar Caitiff – not quite dead – burbled blood-flecked indignation at the detective for unveiling his not-so-secret map.

Soon enough, Theophilus Dare and his companions set sail for the sand-swept territories, soaring safely above the beggars and thieves hiding amid the pitifully few oases in those wasted lands.

Here, the search for the Enigmatic Prism — whatever it was, mystic or simply mysterious — continued in haste…

ARE YOU CERTAIN THIS IS THE *SAFEST* MODE OF TRAVEL, THEO?

WE HAVEN'T MUCH LUCK WITH *AIRSHIPS*

THE PHYSIMETRICS OF HOT AIR–

–WILL DO YOUR CLOGGED SINUSES *GOOD*, SIMON

ONE DAY *EVERYONE* WILL SOJOURN BY DIRIGIBLE

WITH THE WIND AT OUR BACKS, WE SHOULD REACH OUR DESTINATION WELL BEFORE NIGHTFALL

IF THE ENIGMATIC PRISM IS THERE, WE'LL FIND IT!

BUT WHAT *IS* THIS PRISM, THEO?

WHAT DOES IT DO?

IS IT DANGEROUS?

I'VE HEARD SUCH AWFUL THINGS

OH, THEO. I'M FRIGHTENED!

ALL *NONSENSE*, MISS BISHOP

SUPERSTITIOUS HOODLEDIFLOP!

WE LIVE IN AN AGE OF SCIENCE AND THINGAMABOBS!

YES, WELL

AS LONG AS THE SCIENCE AND HOT AIR KEEPS US SAFELY ABOVE THE DESERT THIEVES AND BRIGANDS AND

–CAVALIERS.

OH MY

KABOOM

YIKES!

GET DOWN, LASS.E!

OHHHH, THEO!

LONG HAVE I AWAITED THIS--

CAVALIERS *INDEED*, SIMON

THAT DIRIGIBLE FLIES THE JOLLY ROGER.

--MOMENT?!

THEY'RE PIRATES OF THE AIRWAYS!

ARRRH!

AND A YO-HO-HO!

BE THERE WOMENFOLK ABOARD?

QUICQUEEG HOPE SO.

HIM LIKE WOMEN

SAVAGES

WHO ARE THEY, THEO?

WE MEET AGAIN, M'SIEUR DARE!

OOO-HAH!

I SHOULD HAVE *KNOWN*.

IS THAT--

YES.

INSPECTOR MONDIEU'S TWIN BROTHER, *ETIENNE*.

OUI, ZAT IS ME!

GENDARME EMIL MUST HAVE *TELEPHONED* HIM JUST AFTER WE LEFT CAITIFF'S OFFICES!

EMIL AND I ARE VERY CLOSE

AND THE MONKEY?

MALCOLM EES JUST A *FRIEND*

EN GARDE!

GIVE IT BACK OR YOU'LL GET A *THUMPING!*

HOO!

THE DANDY FIGHTS WITH A *CANE*, ME BUCKOS!

AVAST, I SAY!

HAW!

CUT THE BALLAST, EMMA!

BUT WHY?

TO *RISE* ABOVE THIS OCCASION!

RISE ABOVE THE--?

OH, I GET YOUR MEANING!

SPLENDID WORK, EMMA!

MAKE WIND, LADS!

SHE'S SETTIN' SAIL WIT' OUR CAP'N ABOARD!

ONCE I HAVE *KEELED* YOU, I WILL TAKE ZIS MAP AND ROMANCE ZE FAIR LADY, M'SIEUR DARE!

I THINK *NOT*, RUFFIAN

BUT I AM SO *SKEELED* AT KEELING AND ROMANCING, MADAMEMOISELLE

IN MY ARMS YOU WILL FEEL AS IF YOU DANCE ON THEEN -

-AIRR RRRRRRR!

AT LEAST GIVE TO ME BACK MY SWORD!

LOOM

ZUT ALORS!

YOU SAVED US, THEO!

HAD YOU ANY *DOUBT*?

LOOK, MY FRIENDS...

WE'VE ARRIVED!

THE FABLED FORTRESS OF *SAMHARA*

WHAT SIGHTS AND DELIGHTS WILL WE FIND THERE BEHIND ITS ANCIENT WALLS?

HOW WILL THEO EVER NOTICE ME *NOW*?

YOU SPEAK AS IF HE EVER NOTICED YOU *BEFORE*

NOW, IF YOU DON'T MIND, I MUST UPDATE THE JOURNAL OF THESE ADVENTURES PAST THE SOUTHERN MERIDIAN

I'M SURE THEO HIMSELF HAS MORE *PRESSING* BUSINESS TO ATTEND

giggle!

tee-hee!

tee-hee!

giggle!

OH, THEOPHILUS!

YOU MUST NEVER LEAVE US!
NO!
NEVER!
REGRETTABLY, I *MUST*
MY WORK IS DONE HERE, LASSIES.
WERE YOU SUCCESSFUL, THEO?
THAT ALL *DEPENDS*...
THE FAMILY JEWEL!
I DID UNCOVER THIS IN MY *EXCAVATIONS*.
YOU'VE FOUND THE PRISM!
NO. MERELY ANOTHER *DECOY* IN THIS HUNT
AND THE GEM YOU HOLD?
A ROYAL SIGIL?
I'M NOT QUITE CERTAIN~
~BUT I THINK I MAY HAVE INADVERTANTLY BECOME *SULTAN* OF THIS OASIS.
>Humph!<
THEN THIS WAS ALL A *WASTE* OF TIME.
CONSIDER IT A PROCESS OF *ELIMINATION*, EMMA.
IF THE PRISM IS NEITHER *EAST* IN BALZACIA NOR *SOUTH* IN SAMHARA~
~THEN MAYHAP WE MIGHT FIND IT *NORTH* IN THE HINTERGLACES
THANK HEAVENS EMMA SPEAKS *MUKLUK*
ANY INCLINATION *WHAT* THEY'RE SAYING, THEO?
THE CHIEF APPEARS TO BE GIVING EMMA THE COLD SHOULDER OLD CHAP.
HOW RUDE!
WHAT DID HE SAY?
CHIEF KWINN OFFERED TO *BARTER*
ME FOR THE PRISM!
YOU'RE WORTH FAR *MORE*, EMMA

PERHAPS YOU *MISSPOKE*, EMMA--

--OR VERY LIKELY *MISHEARD* THE CHIEF'S PROPOSITION

I AM FLUENT IN *SEVENTEEN* ABORIGINAL TONGUES, SIMON

THE CHIEF'S INTENTIONS WERE AS CLEAR AS *CRYSTAL*

PRECISELY

YOU *AGREE* WITH ME, THEO?

I DO.

IN FACT, THE VERY ICE WE TREAD UPON IS ONE *GIANT* CRYSTAL PRISM

EMMA, PLEASE TELL CHIEF KWINN THAT WE *DECLINE* HIS PROPOSED TRADE

<YUK PUK SCHMUK!>

THAT'S NOT VERY *LADYLIKE*

I THOUGHT YOU *COULDN'T* SPEAK MUKLUK

I DON'T

MUSH!

ARF!

Consulting Caitiff's map once more, Dare and his intrepid assistants crossed the snowy lands by sled and dog. When foodstocks ran short, they had little recourse but to eat one or two of the eager canines. The rest were set free upon sight of the Western Forests of Gilhooey. Happy as pups they romped – the dogs, that is – some whimpering sadly that their service to the daring detective had concluded.

From there, the trio made their way at a brisk hike to find Miranda Cross

The exertion, however, was not without its benefits...

WHY, I SCARCELY NEED THIS CANE FOR MORE THAN A WALKING STICK!

MIRANDA CROSS

MY *LIMP* HAS ABATED!

ALL THIS ADVENTURING HAS *TOUGHENED* YOU UP, SIMON!

I'VE TOUGHENED *ALSO*, THEO!

I'VE HALF A MIND TO TOSS THE OLD PIKE-STAFF AWAY FOR GOOD!

THEN YOU'LL JUST HAVE THE *ONE* STICK IN YOUR--

DEAD END, ASSISTANTS

THE MAP STOPS HERE

THIS PLACE IS MIRANDA CROSS?

BUT NO SIGN OF MARKER FOR PASSING WAYFARERS?

JUDGING BY THE GROWTH OF MOSS AND LICHEN, WE'RE THE *FIRST* TO PASS THIS WAY--SAVE FOR A FOREST RAT OR THREE -IN SOME TIME

SKRTCH SKRTCH

THEO, ETCHED IN THE TREE BARK--

~X MARKS THE SPOT!

CLOSE, BUT NOT QUITE

KREEEEEEKK

THAT'S BETTER

A CROSS

MIRANDA CROSS!

I MAY HAVE FOUND A *NEW* USE FOR YOUR CANE, SIMON

OUR GATEWAY TO THE ENIGMATIC PRISM APPEARS TO BE STUCK FAST.

PRY AWAY, THEO!

WHY, IT LOOKS LIKE A DOOR FOR A *WEE* PERSON!

AS WEE AS WEE CAN BE, EMMA

A COLUMN CARVED FROM THE ROOT!

THEO, WAIT WAIT

THERE'S MORE!

OH, THEO IT'S SO *SMALL!*

NOT IF WE GO ON HANDS AND KNEES

A SUBTERRANEAN CATHEDRAL!

THE WALLS MUST BE SOME SIX AND SIXTY FEET HIGH UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS!

THEO, COULD IT BE

THE ENIGMATIC PRISM!

AND IT'S *OURS* FOR THE TAKING!

NAE.

THE PRISM IS *YOURS?*

AYE

NOT TO WORRY

EMMA, IN YOUR BEST *WEEFOLK*, TELL THE LITTLE CHAPS--

HA!

CAREFUL, THEO

I'VE HEARD STORIES OF THESE WEE *BANTAMS*.

FIERCE FIGHTERS *ALL*.

WHOLLY DEDICATED TO THE ART OF WAR AND THE PURSUIT OF PRECIOUS METALS TO FILL THEIR FABLED POTS!

SUPERSTITIOUS HOODLEDIFLOP!

NAE

SIMON, YOU'LL FIND THAT ANY FIGHT CAN BE ENDED IN *SHORT* ORDER IF ONE PUTS THE PROPER FOOT FORWARD

LIKE SO

PUNT

JIM, THEO

SEE?

NOT TO WORRY, EM

--MUPH!

HAI-AYE!

POK

HAI!

HAI!

NO QUARTER!

HAI!

HAI!

HAI!

HAI!

HAI!

WHAT A *ROW!*

AL. THOSE GRABBING HANDS AND NASTY GNASHING TEETH

BUT WE *SHOWED* THOSE BATTLING BANTAMS WHAT FOR, EMMA!

A TUSSLE WELL WORTH POSSESSING THE ENIGMATIC PRISM AT LAST

AND LET US *NOT* FORGET THE WEEFOLK'S POT OF PRECIOUS METALS

MORE FORTUNE THAN WE COULD EVER *HOPE* TO SPEND

AND WHAT GRAND PLANS DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUR SHARE, SIMON?

I DARESAY I'LL WRING OUT A FEW COINS TO BUY A *TRUSS* FOR MY ACHING BACK!

LET ME SEE

IN ADDITION TO MY MASTERY OF DETECTING, I'M ALSO A GIFTED SURGEON AND HEALER

THERE'S YOUR PROBLEM!

IS IT A *BOIL?*

WILL IT REQUIRE *LANCING?*

EXCISING SHOULD DO THE TRICK

HAI!

Oh, THAT FEELS *MUCH* BETTER ALREADY!

NAEEEEEEE!

NOW, THERE'S JUST THE MATTER OF DISPENSING WITH THE PRISM

ANY *THOUGHTS,* ASSISTANTS?

THEO, PERHAPS YOU COULD TAKE A SMALL PORTION, BARELY A CARAT AT MOST-

AND FASHION A RING?

HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!

A SMALL ONE

OR NOT

DOE EYED STRUMPET!

THEOPHILUS DARE HAS MUCH TO ANSWER FOR

MINING MY PERSONAL JOURNAL TO CREATE THIS. THIS

FUMP

POORLY WRITTEN AND LARGELY PLAGIARIZED PENNY DREADFUL, WITH SIMON AND MYSELF AS HIS UNWITTING AND ENTIRELY UNCHARACTERISTIC FOILS!

DARE'S DETECTIVES, INDEED.

CAN YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE THAT THIEVING ROGUE SIMON?

WHERE IS IT

SIMON HAS BEEN BEDEVILED BY FEVERED DREAMS SINCE WE FLED PARTINGTON

UNLIKE DARE'S FEEBLE FICTION THE REAL ENIGMATIC PRISM WE CARRY BRINGS ONLY WOE TO ITS POSSESSORS

NOT A POT OF GOLD FROM AN ELFIN TROVE

LEWIS, STOP FIDGETING SO!

BUT MUMMY, I'VE GOT NUFF'N' BETTER TO DO!

DARE'S HIGH DRAMATICS, HOWEVER, MIGHT FIND A MORE RECEPTIVE AUDIENCE WITH SOMEONE CLOSER TO HIS OWN MATURITY AND MENTALITY

MADAM, IF I MAY

THANK YOU, KIND MISS.

CRIMINY!

CONDUCTOR MAY I STEP OUT UPON THE REAR PLATFORM FOR A BREATH OF AIR?

S'ALRIGHT, MISS

JUST DON'T TUMBLE OFF NOW, ROIT?

AND WHERE WOULD I GO?

I SCARCELY KNOW THE DESTINATION SIMON HAS PLOTTED FOR US.

ALL TO RID OURSELVES OF THIS.

THE ENIGMATIC PRISM

PUT IT AWAY!

YOU STARTLED ME!

I NEARLY DROPPED IT FROM THE TRAIN!

WE COULD, YOU KNOW SIMPLY TOSS THE PRISM INTO THE RUSHES

~NEVER TO SEE IT AGAIN

OR BE TROUBLED BY IT

NO
SOMEONE WOULD FIND IT
WE'VE NO CHOICE BUT TO DESTROY THE PRISM
BUT HOW?
WE'LL SETTLE THAT WHEN WE REACH OUR STOP
HOW FAR HAVE WE TRAVELED?
I MUST HAVE FALLEN–
WE'VE TRAVELED AS FAR AS YOU'VE EVER GONE BEFORE BEGINNING TO COMPLAIN
SO I SUPPOSE WE'VE JOURNEYED TO THE LIMITS OF YOUR PATIENCE
THEN WE'LL GO ONE DAY FURTHER
OH, SIMON.
I DOUBT ANOTHER DAY WITH THIS CURSED STONE IN MY POCKET WILL DO EITHER OF US ANY GOOD.
AND I CAN'T SHRUG THE GNAWING SUSPICION
THAT ONE OR BOTH OF US WILL LOSE THIS TERRIBLE GAME

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Consider this a new beginning.

Ironic that it should come at the end. But there can be no doubt in this regard. The Enigmatic Prism MUST be destroyed.

Since misplacing my diary on the island of Irandoa, I have been remiss in keeping a recollection of my time 'assisting' detective Simon Archard.

Only recently did I learn that Theophilus Dare, soldier of fortune and grinning wolf in sheep's clothing, in fact found (or stole?) my writings and claimed them as his own. It would seem that Mister Dare now fancies himself an author of Penny Dreadfuls.

But Dare's 'The Affair of the Enigmatic Prism' is little more than a patchwork quilt (and a poorly stitched one at that) of several adventures I have enjoyed alongside Simon.

As well, Dare's Enigmatic Prism was merely MYSTERIOUS. The truth is, as they say, stranger than fiction. And even Simon is unaware of certain facts that shed light on the Prism's true origins and purposes.

The Baroness Miranda Cross, she of the raven hair and devilish disposition, revealed to me with certain hubris on Irandoa that the Prism was a 'key' of some fashion. If Miranda is to be believed (and why should she have such favor?) then the Prism permitted her access to Arcadia from ELSEWHERE some centuries ago. She has certainly aged well in her time.

Unearthed several years previously on Irandoa by the treasure-hunting archaeologist Clive Penberthy, the Prism captivated Malcolm Lightbourne, Simon's former mentor and first partner. Lightbourne murdered Penberthy for the Prism. Upon betraying Simon and stabbing him near to death, Lightbourne went into hiding. He emerged not long ago, his desires for the Prism not even quenched by a mad scheme to wash away the underpinnings of Partington with a dammed subterranean river. Lightbourne escaped, but to where we know not. With luck, Simon and I managed to keep the Prism from his despicable grasp.

Perhaps foolishly, as I am wont to be, I trusted Simon with the Prism's safekeeping. Unfortunately, I did not account for the possibility that Simon himself would be affected by the Prism's peculiar powers. Whether unconsciously or with waking volition, Simon allowed the Prism to be lost. And only then did we learn its terrible secret: The Enigmatic Prism is somehow fueled by HATE, able to store up its evil energies as wool will hold a spark of stinging static electricity.

Of course, I learned this by touch, and only after the Prism had passed from one Partingtonian to the next, each worse than the one before. In this way I came to meet Simon's heretofore unrevealed SECOND partner, Inspector Thomas Trencher, a detective in private following his retirement.

Mister Trencher pointed us to the wandering Prism and quite possibly gave his own life so that Simon and I could escape a murderous rabble possessed by its power.

And now we are traveling North by rail, fleeing fast with but no other purpose than to rid this world of the Enigmatic Prism. Simon sleeps fitfully, undoubtedly his unconscious mind (the part the Prism has perhaps SEDUCED) at odds with this eventuality.

For now, I can think of no other details to set forth.

Thus I will close my eyes and sleep, likely in fits and starts also, and await new beginnings or endings, whichever fate (or the Enigmatic Prism) has decreed for us.

- E.B.

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SCREEEEEEP
COMFORTABLE?
MMMM
YES, QUITE SO
--OH!
YOU WERE MURMURING IN YOUR SLEEP
A NOT UNCOMMON OCCURRENCE AMONG WEARY TRAVELERS, SIMON
ONLY IN THAT YOU REFERRED TO YOURSELF IN THE THIRD PERSON, EMMA.
AND YOU GRIND YOUR TEETH IN THE MOST ANNOYING MANNER
I
I RECKON IT WAS UNDOUBTEDLY AN UNCONSCIOUS REACTION TO THIS HORRID TALISMAN
THE ENIGMATIC PRISM BRINGS OUT THE WORST, EMMA THAT MUCH IS CERTAIN
THOUGH I TRUST WE'LL BOTH BE BACK TO OUR OLD SELVES SOON ENOUGH

YOU'RE NOT VERY CONVINCING, SIMON ARCHARD

NOT THIS TIME

UNTIL NOW, MY OWN SENSE OF SELF WAS BULWARKED BY THE UNYIELDING RIGIDITY OF YOUR PERSONALITY THAT INNATE BELIEF IN YOUR OWN CONSIDERABLE AND UNDENIABLE ABILITIES

BUT SINCE WE FLED PARTINGTON, I SENSE A GROWING UNCERTAINTY IN THE MASTER DETECTIVE, AS IF THE ENIGMATIC PRISM HAS DIVIDED YOU AS IT WOULD CLEAVE A RAY OF INVISIBLE LIGHT INTO ITS HIDDEN SPECTRA

THE COLORS LAID BARE LIKE LONG-KEPT SECRETS FINALLY REVEALED

OR IS IT MERELY REFLECTING MY OWN CONSIDERABLE AND UNDENIABLE **FEARS?**

CHAFF

GESUNDHEIT

I WAS REFFERING TO THE *NAME* OF THIS HAMLET

A SOBR QUET BEFITT NG YOUR SUDDEN AFFLICTION OF *HAY FEVER,* NO DOUBT

AND YOU FIND HUMOR *APPROPRIATE* AT THIS MOST DESPERATE T.ME?

I DO

CHAFF DEP

CAN YOU MANAGE YOUR COSMETIC CASE

OR SHOULD I HIRE A TEAM OF STRAPPING FARMHANDS TO CONVEY IT FOR YOJ?

OH, I SEE

NOW *YOU'RE* TRYING TO BE AMUSING

I NEVER TRY

SO WE WAIT FOR THE NEXT LOCOMOTIVE?

I DON'T BELIEVE THERE WILL BE *ANOTHER* TRAIN

THE RAILWAY TRACKS ENC RCLE THE TOWN AND DOUBLE BACK UPON THEM-SELVES.

UNLESS THE RAILMEN TELL ME OTHERWISE, I'M CONVINCED THIS IS THE END OF THE LINE

I SEE

THEN CHAFF WILL BE *YOUR* END AS WELL

THAT *THEM* THERE?

THE MISTER AND MISSUS?

PAID THEIR PASSAGE AND THEN SOME

THO' WHY'D THEY GO AND COME TO CHAFF IS

NONE OF YOUR CONCERN CONDJCTOR

THE YOUNG LADY AND I WOULD PREFER OUR TRAVELS BE KEPT OUT OF LOCAL GOSSIP

NO NEED TO RAISE A FUSS, GENT

WELL, IT'S JUST ***NOBODY*** COMES TO CHAFF

ARE VISITORS *BARRED* FROM THIS HAMLET?

DON'T EVER BRING NUFFIN' BUT SUPP, IES UP HEREABOUTS

PASSENGERS *NEVER*

YOU CAN UNDERSTAND LEM AND ME BEING *CURIOUS* AND WHAT ROIT?

OF COURSE

CHAFF SOUNDS LIKE THE PERFECT PLACE TO *LOSE* ONE'S TROUBLES

NOT MUCH HERE BUT WHEAT, WHEAT, AND STILL MORE WHEAT.

FELLA COULD LOSE HISSELF AN' HIS PRETTY MISSUS IN ALL OF IT IF HE WEREN'T CAREFUL

THE YOUNG LADY IS *NOT* MY WIFE

*I COULD **FREEZE** THIS MOMENT, YOU KNOW...*

NO, YOU DON'T KNOW.

*BUT IN THOSE INTERMINABLE SPACES BETWEEN SECONDS, I COULD TAKE THE PRISM AND HIDE IT BURY IT IN THE LOAMY SOIL OF THIS PLACE AND ONLY I WOULD KNOW ITS FINAL FATE ...AND YOU WOULD BE **FREE**, SIMON*

OH, IS *THAT* HOW IT IS THEN?

YOUR LOSS, GENT

INDEED

AND THE *NEXT* TRAIN?

WE'RE THE ONLY RUN TO CHAFF

AND WE'LL BE MAKING SMOKE IN TWO HOURS AND TWENTY, ROIT?

AFTER THAT, YOU'LL BE STAYING HERE A *FORTNIGHT*

THAT GIVE YOU AND THE PRETTY LASS TIME ENOUGH TO SEE THE SIGHTS?

ACTUALLY

I BELIEVE WE'LL BE TRAVELING *ON* FROM HERE

TO WHERE?

IT'S LIKE I SAYS

~THERE'S NOT A THING BEYOND CHAFF BUT WHEAT, WHEAT, AND LOTS MORE WHEAT

PERFECT

D.D YOU PACK R DING CLOTHES IN THAT MONSTROSITY?

FOR WHAT?

FOR *RIDING*, EMMA

WE'RE GOING TO NEED HORSES

AND *WHERE* DO YOU INTEND TO GO ON HORSEBACK?

AS FAR FROM THE LIVING AS *POSSIBLE*, EMMA

WELL BEFORE THE PRISM CAN *BLIGHT* THESE INNOCENT FOLK

OR *MOSTLY* INNOCENT

REFUSED HIS LOT

SO CHAFF IS A *HANGING* TOWN?

HOW *LUCKY* FOR US

REFUSED HIS LOT

SEEING AS HOW THE PRISM TENDS TO *FOCUS* HATE AND PERNICIOUS PENT UP THOUGHTS

THUS AMPLIFYING ANY CRUEL INTENTION TO MURDEROUS *RELEASE*.

THAT IS *WHY* WE LEFT PARTINGTON WITH SUCH *HASTE*, YOU'LL RECALL

OUR ESCAPE ONLY MADE POSSIBLE BY INSPECTOR TRENCHER'S GREAT *SACRIFICE*

IF I KNOW TOM TRENCHER, HE'S *FINE*

AND HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE?

BECAUSE WE WERE *PARTNERS* ONCE

...*AFTER* MALCOLM LIGHTBOURNE AND *BEFORE* YOU BECAME MY ASSISTANT

TOM GAVE US THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPARE PARTINGTON EVEN MORE BLOODSHED OVER THE PRISM

AND WE SHOULD DO THE SAME FOR CHAFF, SIMON.

DOWNLANDERS

THE SMITHY SHOULD HAVE *WAITED*

HE COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN, POPPA

YOU'D BEST CLEAR YOUR MIND OF *THOSE* KINDS OF THOUGHTS AND LET ME PAY FOR MY TIN OF SNUFF, ANSON

IS IT TOO LATE TO CHANGE MY MIND ABOUT HIRING A PORTER FOR MY CASE?

MUCH TOO LATE, YES.

WHY *THIS* TOWN IN PARTICULAR, SIMON?

THERE'S NOT A ROOMING HOUSE OR HOSTEL TO BE FOUND

AND I KNOW YOU FAR TOO WELL TO BELIEVE THAT YOU WOULD UNDERTAKE ANY JOURNEY WITHOUT KNOWING THE *EXACT* DESTINATION TO ITS PRECISE LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE, CHECKED AND DOUBLY CHECKED

THEY'LL NOT BE *STAYIN'*, ANSON

ONLY *TROUBLE* CAN COME OF IT

PARDON MY LITANY OF QUESTIONS, SIMON. BUT WOULDN'T A TOWN UNACCUSTOMED TO VISITORS BE ALL THE MORE SUSPICIOUS WHEN OUR MISSION REQUIRES STEALTH AND SECRECY?

CURIOUS.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

A LIVERY WITHOUT LIVESTOCK

THERE WAS A POX

HORSEPOX?

AYUH, WHUT WASN'T PUT DOWN AN' BURNED ARE LEASED OUT FOR THE HARVEST

NOT A SINGLE MULE OR DONKEY TO SPARE GOOD SIR?

NOT A ONE

'CEPTING AN OLD ROAN NAG AT THE SMITHY'S YONDER THERE

AND WILL THE SMITHY BE AMENABLE TO OUR RENTING *HIS* HORSE?

OR *PURCHASING?*

I COULDN'T BE MORE *DOUBTFUL*, GOOD MISS

THAT'D BE THE SMITHY YOU PASSED ACROSS THE WAY

THE HANGED MAN

HANGED *HISSELF*

I'M SHERIFF TO CHAFF, IF YOU'RE WONDERIN'

YOU CAN SEE IF THERE'S STILL A HORSE GRAZIN' AT THE SMITHY'S, BUT YOU OUGHT NOT TO BE KNOCKIN' ABOUT OUT THERE IN THE GRAIN PAST *SUNDOWN*

WE GET THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT STRANGERS AREN'T AT ALL *WELCOME* HERE

IT'S IN EVERYONE'S BEST INTEREST THAT DOWNLANDERS KEEP *OUT* OF CHAFF AND OUR PROBLEMS

WHAT *SORT* OF PROBLEMS, SHERIFF?

REFUSING ONE'S *LOT?*

SOMETHING LIKE THAT

I'LL EXPECT YOU *BOTH* ON THE TRAIN WHEN IT LIGHTS OUT THIS EVENIN'

WE BEEN SPEAKIN' WITH ANSON AT THE MERCANTILE, SHERIFF

AND SPEAKIN'S *ALL* THE LOT OF YOU WILL BE DOIN

LET 'EM DO WHAT THEY CAME TO DO

GO ABOUT YOUR DAY AND MAKE READY FOR THE *HARVEST*

KRKP

KRKKRKKRKKRK...

SIMON, PERHAPS WE SHOULD LINGER AND SEE TO THE NATURE OF CHAFF'S *"PROBLEMS"*

AREN'T YOU THE LEAST BIT CURIOUS ABOUT THE SHERIFF'S LESS THAN *CRYPTIC* WARNING?

I AM NOT

MY *ONLY* CONCERN IS FINDING A HORSE AND RIDING AS FAR AS WE CAN BEFORE THE PRISM INFECTS ANYONE ELSE WITH ITS MANIA

BUT WHAT OF THE SOULS ALREADY LOST TO THE PRISM SIMON?

YOU SAW THEIR EYES

THEY HUNGER FOR IT AS ONE STARVING YEARNS FOR EVEN THE SMALLEST MORSEL

THOSE WHO HAVE TOUCHED IT WOULD DO **ANYTHING** TO POSSESS THIS GEM TUCKED IN MY WAISTPOCKET

YOU DON'T SUPPOSE SOMEONE COULD HAVE FOLLOWED US?

UNLIKELY

OUT OF **SIGHT** IS OUT OF **MIND**, EMMA

I DOUBT THE PRISM COULD AFFECT ANYONE OVER SUCH A DISTANCE

-UNLESS ONE OF THE POSSESSED WE FACED IN PARTINGTON WAS EVIL BEYOND **MEASURE**

TRY **HARDER** TO ALLAY MY FEARS, SIMON

WHERE IS IT?

KRK-KRK-KRK-KRK-

YOU AND I KNOW THAT EVIL WEARS SO **MANY** FACES

KRK?

NO

IT'S MINE

MINE, MINE MINE

I SHOULD TAKE THE PRISM FROM HERE, EMMA.

ONE RIDER CAN GO FARTHER THAN **TWO**.

IT'S **MY** BURDEN

NO, SIMON

I WON'T HEAR OF IT

THEN FORGET I MENTIONED IT

YOU WON'T BE NEEDING RIDING CLOTHES.

THERE'S NO OLD NAG HERE?

CHOOSE YOUR INEVITABLE RETORT **WISELY**, SIMON

HER TETHER'S GNAWED THROUGH

I FOR ONE CAN UNDERSTAND CHAMPING AT THE BIT TO LEAVE THIS PLACE

SIMON

I CAN FEEL THE PRISM PULSING BENEATH MY HANDERCHIEF

THAT'S BECAUSE IT **KNOWS**.

KNOWS WHAT EXACTLY?

IT KNOWS IT WILL NOT LEAVE THIS PLACE **INTACT**

THAT MAKES TWO OF US

WE'RE GOING TO DO WHAT I SHOULD HAVE DONE LONG AGO

FROM THE MOMENT I AWOKE AFTER MALCOLM TRIED TO MURDER ME AND LEFT THE ENIGMATIC PRISM TO MY TRUST

DO WHAT SIMON?

MELT THE PRISM IN THE SMITHY'S FORGE?

ENTOMB IT WITHIN MOLTEN LEAD?

NO

I'M GOING TO *SMASH* IT UNTIL VERY TINY GLOWING BITS

AND I'M GOING TO KEEP SMASHING UNTIL EVEN THE SMALLEST EMBERS NO LONGER DANCE WITH THE LIGHT OF *MADNESS*

THIS SLEDGE SHOULD DO *NICELY*

NOW, EMMA, LET'S HAVE IT

YOU MEAN TO DESTROY IT *HERE*?

SMITE TS EVIL UPON AN ANVIL?

YES I INTEND TO DO THAT VERY THING

HAVE YOU GIVEN ANY THOUGHT AT ALL TO THE POTENTIAL *DANGERS*?

HOW CAN YOU KNOW THAT THE PRISM WON'T JUST *EXPLODE* IN OUR FACES?

LOOSE ALL OF ITS ENERGIES IN ONE FELL SWOOP AND WIPE CHAFF AND US FROM THE MAP?

TO BE FRANK, WE'VE MANY A CLUE WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF YOU STRIKE THE PRISM WITH INTENT TO DO IT *HARM*

THEN I'LL OPT FOR A MORE *DISCRETIONARY* COURSE OF ACTION

JUST GIVE ME THE PRISM AND I'LL WALK AS FAR FURTHER NORTH AS THE DAY WILL TAKE ME

AND ONCE I'M GOOD AND CLEAR FROM ANY INHABITED PLACE, I'LL SHATTER IT UPON A ROCK NO ONE COULD POSSIBLY CARE FOR

YOUR *SARCASM* DOES LITTLE TO-

NO! YOU WON'T HURT IT!

MRS. PRYCE!

IS MINE!

SIMON, SHE'S GOT A GU-

BLAM

UHN!

WHERE IS IT?!

GUN SHE'S GOT A GUN

EMMA, USE YOUR POWER! BEFORE SHE CAN

BLAM

SIMON, SAY -

OH MY POWER

FREEZING THE MOMENT IN THE NICK OF TIME TO SPARE SIMON A SPEEDING BULLET?

DO I TRUST HIM SO LITTLE?

I CARE FOR HIM TOO MUCH

BUT MY POWER IS TAXED WITH STOPPING TIME AND PREVENTING THE SHOT FROM PARTING HIS HAIR IN A MOST UNSIGHTLY FASHION

NOT TO MENTION, KNITTING CLOSED MY OWN BLEEDING WOUND...

BUT FIRST THE BULLET...

NO. NOT WITH THE ACTUAL DANGER AFOOT

FIRST, I'D BEST SECURE THE PRIS...

ZOW!

SKRZZZT

MY POWER

IT'S NEGATING MY POWER!

KAPWING

OH, DEAR NO

WHAT HAVE I DONE?

ILLARKS

MINE?!

WOOSH

EMMA?

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

I I

I FEAR THAT I'VE OPENED A DOOR

FOOM

THE PRISM

IT'S JUST AS MIRANDA TOLD

THE PRISM IS A KEY TO WHATEVER HELL SPAWNED HER!

SIMON!

IT'S SUCKING US IN!

GRAB HOLD OF SOMETHING, EMMA!

IT'S MINE! MINE! MINE!

ILLZRKS

THE CHAIN'S MOORED ME

I CAN ALMOST REACH IT

JUST LET IT GO, SIMON!

SKRELLT

JUST ANOTHER

PLEASE

FOR ME

GOT IT!

SIMON, I'M SLIPPING

DESTROY IT

BEFORE IT DESTROYS YOU AND IT DO IGHTBOURNE

DESTROY IT?

IT WOULD NEVER ALLOW THAT!

NOT WHEN IT JUST WANTS TO GO HOME!

NOOO!

ONE SIDE!

OH.

ANTAEUS, ATTEND ME...

ANTAEUS...

FSSHHHHHHH

CURSE YOU, SIMON ARCHARD...

I CAN'T FEEL THE KEY...

"...I CAN'T BE *CAGED* HERE WITH YOU PITIFUL CREATURES..."

WHU-- WHY ARE WE LOCKED UP IN 'ERE?!

BLOODY GOOD QUESTION THAT IS!

AND WHO MIGHT YOU BE, JAILER?!

INSPECTOR TOM TRENCHER, LATELY RETIRED OF THE PARTINGTON CONSTABULARY...

...BUT NOT WITHOUT CERTAIN POLICE *PRIVILEGES.*

I'VE LOCKED UP THE LOT OF YOU UNTIL YOU COME TO YOUR SENSES OVER THAT WICKED WIDGET--

--THE ENIGMATIC PRISM.

THE *WHAT?!*

I SEEM TO HAVE BLOODIED MY KNUCKLES SOMEHOW...

OTHER'AN THE FRIAR THERE, I'VE NEVER MET THESE LADS BEFORE...

SO YOU'RE CONFESSING THAT YOU'VE NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE PRISM?

"A RARE GEM OF UNIQUE COLOR AND CLARITY?

"JUST MOMENTS AGO, YOU WOULD HAVE *KILLED* FOR IT.

"YOU WOULD HAVE *DIED* FOR IT.

"CAN ANY MAN NOW SWEAR ON YOUR FATHER'S NAME THAT IT NO LONGER HOLDS SWAY OVER YOU?"

WHY...

...WHY DO I FEEL SO **EMPTY** INSIDE?

SIMON, I DON'T COMPREHEND WHAT'S TRANSPIRED HERE.

THE PRISM... THE OLD WOMAN, THE JEWELER'S WIFE, UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS.

GONE, BOTH OF THEM.

WHEN I LOBBED THE PRISM INTO THAT GAPING MAW... SHE LEAPT AFTER IT.

AND THEN THE MOUTH CLOSED LIKE A DOOR SLAMMING SHUT, AS IF LOCKING A COMBINATION WITHIN ITS OWN VAULT.

A GAMBLE THAT ENDED WELL, I SUPPOSE.

I SHOULD THANK YOU FOR SPARING ME FROM BEING SHOT.

USING YOUR *ABILITY* TO DO SO.

AS WELL AS HEALING THE GUNSHOT TO YOUR SHOULDER.

CURIOUS TRICK THAT...

HOW...

...HOW LONG HAVE YOU KNOWN?

A WHILE.

PERHAPS I SHOULD REPHRASE...

HOW ***COULD*** YOU HAVE KNOWN?

TIME, EMMA.

TIME?

I HAVE AN ACUTE SENSE OF IT.

BUT SINCE I HAVE KNOWN YOU, I HAVE LOST IT.

FRACTIONS OF SECONDS. ONCE ALMOST AN ENTIRE MINUTE.

INTERVALS OF NOTHING WHERE THERE SHOULD BE ***MEMORY***.

OUR PURSUIT OF THE MURDERER MURCHAND.

THE DOCKSIDE CONFLAGRATION. NOT ALL OF THE CASES WE'VE SHARED, BUT MORE THAN A FEW.

AND?

AND WHEN ONE LOSES ENTIRE MOMENTS OF HIS LIFE THROUGH NO RATIONAL EXPLANATION, HE MUST CONSIDER THE REALITY OF ***IRRATIONAL*** POSSIBILITIES...

...HOWEVER ***UNLIKELY*** THEY MAY BE.

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU SAVED MY LIFE, EMMA?

WHY DO YOU ASK?

BECAUSE I WANT TO PROPERLY THANK MY *PARTNER* FOR KEEPING COUNT.
WELL PLAYED, EMMA...
...WELL PLAYED.
YOUR POWER...IS IT WITCHCRAFT?
MIND OVER MATTER?
I CAN'T EXPLAIN...
IT'S GONE, TOO.
TOUCHING THE PRISM DRAINED IT FROM ME.
I CAN'T FEEL IT ANYMORE.
PERHAPS IT'S FOR THE *BEST*.
ONE COULD EASILY *OVER-INDULGE* SUCH A GIFT WITH FREQUENT USE.
PERHAPS...
TELL ME THIS, THEN...
JUST WHO *IS* EMMA BISHOP?
WHY, SIMON ARCHARD...
...I THOUGHT YOU *LIKED* MYSTERIES?
WEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
SIMON!
THE TRAIN!
NEVER MIND *THAT,* EMMA.
WE'LL CATCH THE NEXT LOCOMOTIVE IN A FORTNIGHT.
WHAT SAY YOU AND I TAKE THE TIME TO SOLVE *THIS* TOWN'S MYSTERIES?

Dear Readers:

As you may have surmised from this issue's explosive ending, you've just reached the concluding issue of RUSE. It should be said, however, that the adventures of master sleuth Simon Archard and his intrepid partner Emma Bishop are far from over.

As chronicled in the concluding pages of this tale, mysteries yet abound.

Quite a few junior detectives among you have postulated that our villainess Miranda Cross has ties to the vile Negation. The question is, was it their twisted realm spied here at story's end as it tried to suck the marrow from Arcadia? And is that where Mrs. Pryce, who certainly proved herself to be the most evil among the possessed Partingtonians, was swept away to?

If this line of questioning intrigues you, you may want to follow the trail of clues into the pages of NEGATION WAR, beginning in March 2004.

For my part, I've enjoyed my stay in Partington, and I'll profoundly miss Simon and Emma.

More so, I'll miss collaborating with my friends Butch Guice, Paul Ryan, and Michael Perkins, consummate artists and gentlemen all. You welcomed me into your families and made the words flow so easily.

And I would be remiss if I didn't mention series colorists Laura Martin, Frank D'Armata, and Nick Bell, as well as letterer Dave Lanphear and production designer Randy Martin, who—from Penny Arcadian to closing credits—made RUSE one of the best looking books on the shelves, wot?

Most of all, I want to thank YOU, the readers, for giving me a chance following Mark Waid's departure from the title. Mark's shoes are never easy to fill, but the standards to which you held RUSE made it one of the most challenging creative exercises of my writing life.

Cheerio!
Scott Beatty

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